

CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

THE LUDGATE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE

CONTENTS.

DECEMBER.

AN APOSTLE OF FREEDOM.

A complete Novel.

A CHAT WITH THE CIRCUS KING.

HIDDEN SKETCHES.

GIRTON COLLEGE.

LANCER AND DRAGOON.

A PASSION FLOWER.

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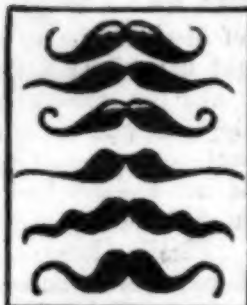
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THE DEAD MAN AT THE WHEEL.

FIVE years ago this present summer (1893), an English sailing ship was struggling and tumbling in the midst of a cyclonic gale in the South Atlantic. As a part of the effort to bring the ship to the wind, the mate sang out to the man at the wheel to put the helm hard over. Seeing that the man made no movement to obey the order, the mate rushed to him in a fit of rage. On getting in front of him, the officer looked for an instant and ejaculated "MY GRACIOUS!" The poor steersman's eyes were turned up in their sockets, the upper lip was withdrawn from the teeth and the facial muscles fixed as though cast in bronze. He was dead, with his horny fingers still gripping the spokes. A stroke of lightning had done the job in a fraction of a second. He may have heard the first words of the mate's order and been deaf to all the others. But how long was the electric battery in the heavens loading for that fatal shot? Tell me that.

But, you say, not many people are struck dead that way. True, not many comparatively. There are things however—. Well, here's an incident that may help you to understand.

In February, 1890, Mr. George Martin, of 92, Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington, London, was working at Chingford. One day while thus engaged, a sharp pain struck across the small of his back. The writer of these lines once had that same pain strike him while he was washing his hands at a sink in his own house, and fell to the floor as though a musket-ball had gone through him. Millions of men (it's nearly always men, seldom women) have been dumped to the ground that way without having the ghost of an idea what ailed them. And lots of 'em have died in from ten to thirty days afterwards, and some in less than thirty minutes in convulsions. That, too, understand, without any previous intimation of anything being the matter with them. The doctors will call such a style of taking off by any of a dozen names; commonly *uræmia*. What's that? Wait a bit. Let's get on with Martin's experience first.

The pain he speaks of disabled him as a blow from a club might have done. Or rather, he says, it felt like the thrust of a knife. He dropped his work and set out for home, but had trouble enough getting there because he could not use his back. Every attempt to walk or to stir brought on the agony again. Finally, however, he reached home, and sent for a doctor immediately, who said he was suffering from gravel and prescribed some medicine. Getting worse, he consulted successively two other doctors. The last of these medical gentlemen assured him he had stone in the bladder.

Well, the last doctor recommended Mr. Martin to go to a hospital. So he went. He became a patient in the University College Hospital. This was in April, 1890. Whilst there, he passed a stone, suffering excruciating pain as the hard, angular substance tore the tender passages. Improving a little by and by, he returned to his work, but was never well. In a letter, dated April 20th, 1893, he says, "Often I had to give up my work for few a days at a time. For two years I was in this condition, suffering awfully. Finding the doctor's medicine did me no good, I made up my mind to try a medicine that three years ago cured my sister, Mrs. Memery, of Chelson, Torquay, after the doctors said she was incurable. I began taking it in November, 1891, and in two weeks a second stone came from me. But no more. I was soon as well as ever. This medicine—which was Seigel's Syrup—cleared all the gravel from my system without giving me any pain. I have never had any signs of the complaint since."—(Signed) GEORGE MARTIN.

We beg to shake hands with Mr. Martin. Probably he does not realise how narrow an escape he had from chronic and a deadly disease. The shock that struck him at Chingford was the opening gun, the first *sensible* touch of the poison—*uræmia*—kidney secretion, uric acid, in the blood. His case has a history of indigestion and dyspepsia—the foundation and cause of it all. Gravel or stone is formed by the uric acid uniting chemically with the alkalies of the body. Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup cures by expelling the acid and preventing the formation of more. But keep an eye on your digestion. There's where the deadly bolt is forged.

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

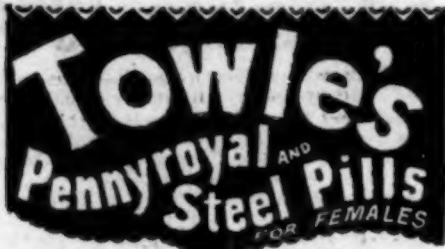
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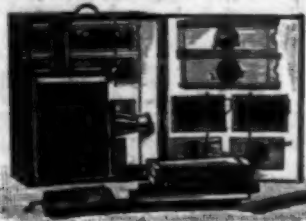
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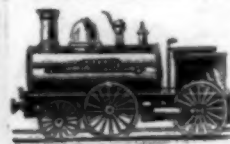
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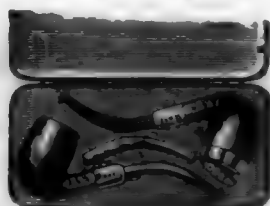
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An Apostle of Freedom.

A Tale of the Anarchists.

By EDWIN HUGHES, B.A., Author of "Medical Mysteries,"
"Two Christmas Eves," &c.

CHAPTER I.

DENNING'S DISCOVERY.

WAS it to be a success that would bring him fame? Was he at last to be master of the secret that had baffled him for years? or was he but about to add another failure to the already long list—a failure involving, it might be, swift and instant annihilation?

Wilfred Denning looked at the little clock that ticked on the mantelpiece and saw that but five minutes of the glorious summer night had to run out before the birth of a new day.

He laid down the materials with which he had been working and passed into the garden that surrounded the laboratory he had built for himself.

Overhead the stars burned in an ocean of blue, and stooping to the western horizon there swam the half of a silver moon.

In a few short minutes he determined to put his fortune to the touch; and if the work of months that had rolled into years were not crowned with success, there was a strong probability that he would never know the sting of defeat.

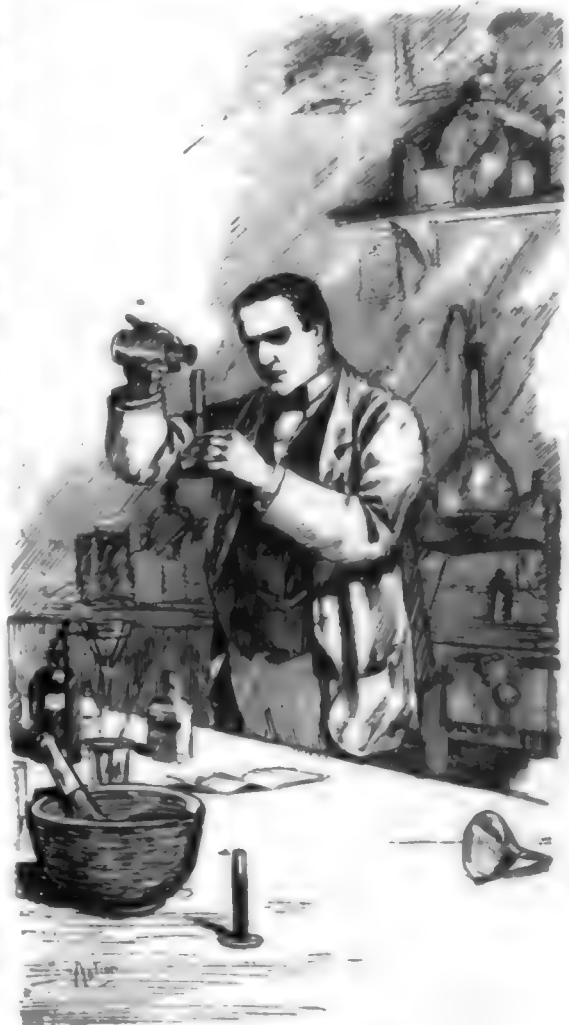
He looked round on all the familiar objects that had grown to be as his friends and saw them bathed in that glorious light that mellowed and refined their sharper lines into tracings of exquisite beauty.

For the last time he ran over the steps that had led him to this momentous crisis of his life, and, although the stake for which he was throwing might be existence itself, he felt satisfied that his patient and exact labour, and the scrupulous nicety of his preliminary experiments, would, if no impurity of ingredients intervened, roll the dice in his favour.

In the midst of his thoughts there stole up on the soft night wind the first note of

the chimes heralding midnight, and before the last stroke of the hour had sounded, he had locked himself into his room and stood ready for the cast.

He took up a flask half-full of a substance that threw out in the light of the lamp a play of colours as though it had been a huge opal, and poured into a test tube a sufficiency for his experiment.



HE TOOK UP A FLASK

He knew perfectly well the dangerous nature of the substance he was handling; so dangerous, indeed, that even the smallest quantity necessary for the trial would, if he had made a mistake, produce an awful explosion. Still he had the most perfect trust in his methods, and with a steady hand, he gently poured down the side of the test tube a few drops of a colourless fluid and eagerly watched the first kiss of the liquids.

Over the surface of the opal there spread a soft blush that gradually gathered depth of colour, until the whole of the contents glowed purple.

Now came the crucial moment!

If, when he added the next drops, the purple colour faded away into a dead white, he would be the possessor of the secret that had baffled him for years; if there came the faintest tinge of blue it would probably be the last colour that his straining eyes would ever behold!

With a deliberate hand he poured on.

Slowly, oh so slowly it seemed to him, the colour waned until he held in his hand a tube filled with fluid white as milk.

He staggered back and sank into an armchair, stunned by the success that had come to him, and never till that moment had he fully realised the truth and force of the pithy saying "Knowledge is Power."

* * *

Some years back Denning had entered at University College, London, with a view to qualifying for the practice of medicine. There comes a time in every medical student's career when he must needs dabble, be it ever so little, in the mysteries of chemistry; and whereas most men content themselves with the veriest sip of that subtle science, Denning set himself to drink to the full, of what was henceforth to him the one and only study. His days were spent for the greater part in the laboratory connected with the college, and so enamoured did he become of his mistress that he purchased a house Clapham-way, and in the garden attached thereto set up a small building and there often carried on his studies far into the night.

It fell out that, soon after he began his researches, Professor Dallaston, the head of the college chemistry department, was engaged in carrying out a series of experiments bearing upon certain explosives.

Seeing that Denning was an eager and

interested student, the Professor gave him sundry offices to perform in connection with the work, and gradually he grew into such favour that he became his teacher's right-hand man. As time went on he began to investigate for himself, with the result that he one day found himself standing behind the bench in the chemistry theatre, prepared to demonstrate the properties of an explosive that he was vain enough to imagine that he had discovered. Never could he forget the chorus of laughter that went up, when, after he had ended his demonstration, the Professor, in a few incisive sentences, proved that his explosive was as ancient as Gunpowder Plot. He slunk away through the Professor's door like one who had been caught in a theft, and for a time nursed his wounded feelings in private, refusing to be comforted even by the kindly letter Dallaston wrote to him, bidding him take heart of grace and follow up his investigations on similar lines.

"You have been unlucky enough," the letter went on, "to re-discover a forgotten substance, but to have done even that much, independently, is no mean feat for a beginner. *Macte virtute, puer!* Persevere."

At the end of a month he came back to face the inevitable chaff and ridicule that he knew would be dealt out unsparingly in connection with what they were pleased to call his "fizzle;" and of all the satire that would be levelled at him, he dreaded most that which would come from the biting tongue of Alan Trenman.

Wilfred Denning—or, to give him his full name, Wilfred Joyce Denning—was the only child of the Squire of the village of which Trenman's father was the Doctor; and when the Squire died, he entrusted his son and his son's fortune to the guardianship of Dr. Trenman, who carried out his trust so well and faithfully that when Denning came of age he was a wealthy man.

The two boys were sent to the same public school, but their progress was in marked contrast. Alan ever brilliant, and rising easily to the head of the form; Wilfred plodding on, but gravitating steadily to the foot of the class. Even in their schooldays Denning had many a taste of Trenman's sharp wit, to which, at the time our story opens, age had added a keen polish that made him a

desirable companion only so long as he was scourging some one else with his satire.

The young men entered University College at the same time and with the same object, Trenman of necessity, for to him would descend his father's practice, and Denning from choice. They soon drifted apart, however, for the former became more and more the man about town, doing the minimum of work and taking the maximum of pleasure, whilst, as has been shown, the latter was devoted, in great measure, to a life of study.

Although Denning had been so absorbed in his work, he by no means neglected his physical training, and at six-and-twenty he was a well enough made young fellow, with a fairly handsome face, by no means sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. You could read his nature by the steady gaze of his expressive dark eyes, by the noble sweep of his high forehead, and by the quiet determination with which he tackled the difficulties, and they were many, that came in his way.

To explain the triumph that he had just achieved, and to understand the terrible position in which that triumph afterwards placed him, it will be necessary to trouble the reader with a few facts concerning the nature of the work in which he had been engaged.

It is common knowledge that there are many explosives—nitro-glycerine to wit—that are excessively dangerous to handle by reason of the fact that there are so many agents, chemical and otherwise, that can rouse into activity the magazines of mischief they contain.

Now it had occurred to Denning to work on these lines, viz., to take some highly active body, and to separate it into two parts in such a way that each of these should be inert in itself, but that when brought together they should take on all the properties of the parent body. Truly a vast problem expressed in a few words, and one that led him into a chemical labyrinth, a veritable maze, from which he seemed likely to never emerge.

He had very soon decided upon the substance with which he would experiment, and at an early period of his research he had succeeded in producing from it two bodies that were harmless enough in themselves.

One of these he chose, and then his difficulties began, for there were so many re-agents capable of converting it into a most destructive explosive, that it cost him years of labour and an infinity of pains to so alter its nature that at last there were but *two* substances that could develop its qualities. Then, on that summer night, there came to him, as by an inspiration, the solution of the problem; and so satisfied was he that he had mastered the difficulty, and that now there was but *one* re-agent, and that one known only to himself, that could produce the desired action, that even at the risk of his life, and to have done with his doubts and perplexities, he determined to put the matter to the test.

You may sit in your easy-chair, dear friend, and laugh at the mad-brained enthusiasm of the scientist; you may ask why did not he make himself safe; but if you have never felt the keen delight, the exhilarating pleasure of a victory won in the field of Science, you cannot understand the irrepressible zeal that carries the worker on, even as the soldier is carried to the front of the battle.

And so, in perfect reliance upon his methods and deductions, he had put the matter to the test, and the result had fully justified his confidence.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE IN COATS ROAD.

WHEN Denning had somewhat recovered from the tumult of feelings into which his discovery had thrown him, he went out into the night, and passing into the street, wandered, he knew not whither, until he came to a road with large, detached houses on one side only, and fronting each house was a well-kept lawn with a carriage drive on either side. He leant over the gate of one of these houses, and the small shrubbery on the right hand had such an air of peaceful repose that he mechanically lifted the latch of the gate and entered.

In the shadow of the trees he sat down and gave himself up to a pleasant reverie.

It had been his custom, whenever he required Professor Dallaston's help, to go to that gentleman at his own house, and there he had often met the Professor's daughter, Valentine, too often, indeed, for

his peace of mind, for these meetings ended in the unconditional surrender to her of his heart.

He could hardly tell himself what it was that he loved in her most. To be sure he thought that no face had ever been chiselled and fashioned to such exquisite beauty as hers, with its stately forehead, its mobile mouth and the starry eyes that were for ever taking on some fresh charm in their changing depths. The grace of her manner and the sweetness of her nature fascinated him to the full as much as her beauty, and the touch of her hand sent the blood surging through his veins. At the birth of his passion he was swayed with all the changing moods of early love—now asking himself who was he that such a prize should ever come his way, and again vowing with all the fervour of youth that he would make his name known among men, make it such a one that even she should be honoured by accepting it. And there were times when he felt and hoped that she was not indifferent to him.

He had only been seated for a few minutes; he had scarcely entered the gates of his mental paradise; his castles in the air had risen but a few feet, when he was suddenly brought back to the everyday world.

With a low moan, as of horror, a woman rushed from the house and fled down the drive towards the gate on the farther side of the lawn. He could plainly see her figure, clad in white clinging drapery, as she ran

in the line of light that streamed from the open hall-door, but he was too far back to catch a glimpse of her face, round which hung a wrap of some fleecy material.

In the light of the stars, for the moon was now low down and had almost set, her figure soon became indistinct, and the click of the latch as the gate swung to after her brought him to his feet.

He rushed across the lawn, but quick as his movements were, when he reached the road he could see no signs of her.

Hurrying forward, about twenty paces farther on he came upon a cross street, and looking down this, caught sight of the woman entering a hansom cab.

The driver was leaning over, listening to her directions. For one second the woman's face came into the circle of the lamp's light, and in that second he recognised Valentine Dallaston!

In his excitement, he called her by name, but his cry was drowned in the clatter of hoofs and the roll of the cab, as the horse sprang forward; and before he could reach the spot, she had been whirled away at such a rapid pace that pursuit was useless.

What, he wondered, could have brought Valentine so far from home at this time of the morning, for it was nigh upon one o'clock? And what had caused that smothered cry of horror that had first called his attention to her as she rushed down the steps?

Evidently something inside that house, something that she had either seen or suffered; and yet, when



THE PROFESSOR'S DAUGHTER, VALENTINE.

he got back to the place, it was as still as death, with the light from its open door flooding the pathway and the lawn. To that light he was drawn by an irresistible impulse like a moth to a lamp.

He passed up the steps and through the doorway, and found himself in a spacious hall, furnished in a style which, if somewhat loud, yet gave tokens of the occupier's wealth in every object that met the eye.

He pushed the hall-door to, behind him, for the light might attract the attention of some passing policeman, and he could not but see how embarrassing a position his would be, if he were found wandering about another man's house.

There were doors on either hand, but the one on the left, nearest to him, was slightly open, and he could see that the room within was lit up with a soft, rosy light.

The indefinable sense of dread, conjured up by the deathly stillness of the house, became more acute as he pushed the door open. The lamps from which came the soft light were shaded with some coloured material, so that the further parts of the room were left in a subdued light. Heavy velvet curtains hung from brass rods above the windows, and reached the thick, soft carpet. At the far end of the long table that stood in the centre of the room a man was sitting, his right hand thrown out before him, the pen that he had been writing with still between his fingers. His head lay on his shoulder, and the left arm hung beside him in a loose, lifeless fashion, so that the hand was invisible below the edge of the table. Beneath his face and right arm, and scattered in some confusion, as though they had been hastily turned over, were several papers.



HE WENT CLOSER TO THE MAN.

Something in the set stillness of the figure, in the limp bend of the neck, in the loose-hanging arm, told Denning that he had discovered the source of Valentine's terror.

He went closer to the man.

Across the topmost paper, and stretching to the edge of the table, was a thin red line.

He had but to glance at it to know what it was.

Mastering with a great effort the horror that was nearly driving him from the house, as it had driven the girl, he put his hand under the moist forehead that was still warm, and lifted the face.

He looked upon the features of one, who, though past middle life, had evidently been a strong, vigorous man, and whose face, though somewhat distorted, was by no means ill-looking. The man was in evening dress, and, turning back the coat, Denning searched for the wound that had brought him to this dreadful pass.

He had not far to look.

Just above and behind the left clavicle, there was a clean cut, about an inch wide, that had reached the heart through coat and shirt, cutting the garments in such fashion that it was evident the weapon must have been double-edged and as keen as a razor.

How long was it since that stroke had

been delivered, undoubtedly by a cunning hand, that knew how to strike once and once only?

Even with his limited medical knowledge, Denning knew that the man must have been living within the hour, and again he was nearly overcome with horror when he reflected how suddenly and swiftly the poor wretch had been snatched from the world of thought.

He replaced the head on the shoulder as he had found it, and while doing so, he distinctly heard a slight jarring noise, that seemed to reach him from some inner room; and then, for the first time, he became aware that in the left-hand corner there was a door opening into another apartment. This door was not quite closed, and now there flashed across him the recollection that when he first entered, and whilst his attention had been almost wholly arrested by the figure at the table, he had been dimly conscious of some slight movement in that very corner. Was it possible that the assassin was lying *perdu* in that room?

If so, dare he enter it and look for him? or should he give the alarm, and arouse the household—for servants there must be in that great house?

How should he explain his presence to those who would answer his summons?

Was he to say that Valentine had seen as much as himself, and had fled without making a sign?

The thought of the girl he loved decided him.

He would see her first before he opened his lips to a soul, unless it should be his fate to fall by the same weapon as the man beside him; for now that reason had got the better of the shock that any man would have felt at first, and now that his nerves were braced to a tension that gave him the strength of two men, he determined to see the inside of that room.

He looked about for a light.

On the mantelpiece was a vase full of tapers. Twisting three or four of these together, he lit them at the gas, and waiting until they had burned up into a full, steady flame, he crept softly to the door, and the next moment stood within an apartment that seemed half library, half smoking-room.

He felt the very slightest of draughts blowing in his face, and the light flickered gently backwards; and looking towards the far corner, he saw that

one-half of the more distant of the two French windows was open. The undoing of the window and the pulling it open gently were just the acts that would have caused the slight noise that he had heard; and whoever had been in the room could have left it easily by this window, for it opened directly upon the lawn. He searched the place thoroughly. Close to the window he found the half of a cigarette, or, rather, to describe it more accurately, the whole of the tobacco that had formed part of the cigarette, with half the paper torn from it. Looking a little further, he found the other half of the paper, and close beside it something glittered and flashed in the light of the small torch that was now burning low, and taking up the shining object, he wrapped it in the piece of cigarette paper and carried it into the other room.

It was an ear-ring that he had found, and of such peculiar shape and make, that to have seen it once was to recognise it again instantly.

When he last saw it, the little gem it held was sparkling and gleaming in the tiny ear of Valentine Dallaston. He was aroused from the contemplation of the ornament by a trifling sound.

The pen that up till now had rested between the dead man's fingers slipped from its place, and, falling on the table, rolled towards the papers, which, except for a casual glance, Denning had not noticed. His attention was now drawn to them, and the signature he saw upon the paper nearest to him was a signature with which he was perfectly familiar, for it was none other than the sign manual of William James Dallaston, and it footed a document that bore silent testimony to the fact that the said Dallaston owed Silas Jephson the sum of three thousand pounds!

Stunned and dazed, he lifted the man's arm and took up the paper, besmeared as it was by the blood that had spurted over it, and scarce knowing what he did, and with some misty idea that the paper might compromise Valentine if it were found there, he folded it and put it in his pocket-book.

Looking round the room carefully, he noticed on a side table a spirit-stand and glasses, and a half-empty champagne bottle, the bubbles in which were still rising as though it had been but recently opened. There was nothing that could

furnish a clue, at least to his inexperienced eyes, to the closing scenes of the man's life, and so, leaving him to his long sleep, he stole quietly out of the room and the house, and creeping along in the shadow of the shrubbery, reached the street, and after wandering for some time came upon a road that he knew and as speedily as possible made his way home.

There he sat down, and tried to piece together some explanation of the tragedy that had slipped into his hitherto uneventful life.

He began by, at once and for ever, putting from him the idea that Valentine had had any—even the very slightest—share in the murder, and he vowed that, no matter what turn affairs might take, or however black against her the outlook might become, he should always believe her innocent, aye, even if the angel Gabriel were her accuser.

It was idle for him to speculate as to what motive had taken her to that house, whose designation, and, indeed, the very street in which it stood, were unknown to him.

The document in his possession might give rise to a hundred conjectures, but he would put them all from him until he saw her alone, and then, when he showed her the paper and returned her ear-ring, she would, he felt sure, give him an explanation of her presence that would be satisfactory.

She had seen the man before he had, and Denning thought that if she saw fit to inform the police, she would do so. At least, he need not complicate matters by doing so, for, of a surety, the dead man must speedily be found, and, at all events, he, poor fellow, was beyond help. That Valentine had been in the room at some time or other seemed conclusive, from the fact of his finding her ornament there. The torn cigarette might be accounted for by the fact that the chamber was evidently used for smoking purposes, for he had noticed pipes and cigars and other paraphernalia scattered about that clearly showed the use to which it was put.

Tired out with the worry of his thoughts, he came at last to the conclusion that he would not move in the matter until he had seen and spoken with Miss Dallaston, and presently looking out of the window, he saw, looming up in the dawn of the summer morning, the outlines of the little

laboratory, and he felt that the great discovery which was to make him famous had been totally eclipsed for the present in the shadow of the crime whose tragic ending had been so startlingly brought to his notice.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROFESSOR'S DIFFICULTIES.

EARLY the next morning, for prolonged sleep was a matter of impossibility under the circumstances, Denning presented himself at the Dallastons' house at Brook Place, and his very first glance at the Professor told him that trouble in some form or other had fallen upon him.

He had been at once shown into "the Den," for he was a well-known visitor, and came at all hours, and there the dear old man sat, the table in front of him littered with papers in hopeless confusion, and in his hand a portentous-looking document, the blue envelope of which lay before him.

"Good morning, Denning!" he said, stretching out his hand, and assuming as cheerful a look as possible.

"Good morning, sir," Denning replied.

"I'm very busy now, Wilfred," the Professor went on, dropping into his familiar habit of calling the other by his Christian name, and stowing away the letter in the blue envelope. "Very busy, or perhaps I ought to say worried. Do you want to ask me anything particular? Can you come round again in about an hour's time? I'm dreadfully bothered."

It at once occurred to Denning that the document which he had abstracted that morning was closely connected with the Professor's worry, and knowing that it was well within his power—for, as has been said, he was a wealthy man—to help his old friend, if he would but confide in him, he determined to make him do so, and to that end sat down instead of complying with his request to leave him.

"You perhaps don't understand me, Wilfred," said the Professor in as irritable a tone as he was capable of assuming. "I'm much bothered, and I really can't at the present moment bring myself to discuss any scientific questions. Come again, there's a good fellow, in an hour's time."

"Willingly, sir," replied Denning. "I can put off what I wanted to say to you; but the moment I came into this room I

saw that you were in trouble. I think you have known me long enough, sir, to understand that I am not actuated by motives of curiosity in asking you if I can be of any help to you. You have done me so many kindnesses; you have helped me, indeed, to a success which I had never attained but for your advice and encouragement."

"You've solved the problem!" cried the Professor. "I knew you would! I knew you would! My dear boy, I congratulate you!" And casting aside the care that had sat so heavily upon him but a moment before, he grasped Denning's hand and shook it warmly.

Now was Denning's opportunity.

He cut the Professor's congratulations short, and promptly brought him back to the consideration of his affairs.

"Don't talk of success," he said, "while you are evidently so distressed. Professor Dallaston, I am not one who has made the niceties of etiquette a study. You may perhaps look upon it as insufferable impertinence if I suggest that your troubles arise from money matters, and if I bluntly

offer to relieve you of such worries by asking you to make me your sole creditor until such time as you can repay me."

All sorts of emotions were struggling for expression on the old man's face.

"My dear Wilfred," he said at last, "you don't know what you are offering to do. Yes, you are right. Why should I try to disguise it from you, since my affairs will soon be matter of public enquiry. Yes, it's that dreadful money. I'm sure I don't know how we've got into such a mess. Poor Val has done all that she could; but, bless you, Wilfred, we never have seemed to be able to manage. Ah! if her dear mother had only lived, we should have been all right. She was such a good manager, and she had such a head for figures! But, there! I don't think even she could have got together three thousand pounds."

"Three thousand pounds, did you say, sir?" Denning slipped in. "Is that all? I think, if you will confide in me, we can easily put that right. I will advance the money at once, if you will allow me."

Dallaston looked at him in astonishment.

"You a rich man, Wilfred?" he said. "Well, I never thought of *you* in that light. Don't tempt me, there's a dear fellow, for, however rich you may be, the sum is enormous."

But Denning was determined, and he beat down all his scruples, and at last made him sign a paper in correct business form; and it seemed to give the Professor the keenest pleasure to have introduced this much business into the matter, showing that W. I. Dallaston owed W. Denning the sum of four thousand pounds, for Denning had readily guessed, from a glance at the papers on the table, that the extra thousand would be useful; and as the Professor dashed off his signature, it really seemed as if he had failed to notice the altered amount.

It was marvellous to



HE GRASPED DENNING'S HAND.

behold the change that came over him; and to see the trouble slipping off his face, and the sunshine struggling back to it, was ample reward to Denning, who had grown to love him as he would have loved his dead father. No sooner had his difficulties been put behind him than the Professor began again about Denning's great success, and when he had lauded his pupil's patience and perseverance to the skies, he ended with a few words of warning—"You possess an awful secret, Wilfred! For Heaven's sake, see to it that it never gets into bad hands."

All this time, you may be sure, Denning was longing to hear some news of Valentine, and at last he managed to stem the torrent of the Professor's scientific enthusiasm, and asked him how she was; nor was he surprised to hear that she had sent down some excuse about a headache, and had not been seen that morning.

Denning was anxious to get into the streets to hear the first news of the discovery of the murder; but he heard nothing of it on his way to his bankers, with whom he deposited four thousand pounds to the Professor's credit. It may as well be stated here that the letter Dallaston had been reading when his pupil called upon him was from Jephson, and it threatened him with instant legal proceedings if he did not take up his bill on the day that it became due.

When Denning came out of the bank it was earlier by a full hour than the usual time for the first edition of the evening papers, so he walked as leisurely as his excitement would allow him towards Charing Cross, but before he got there he met a boy in full cry. "Dreadful murder in Clapham," he was calling. "Full particulars." Denning snatched the paper from him, and without waiting for the change of the sixpence that he threw to him, he hurried down a quiet street, and opening the paper, found the startling head-lines. But his sight seemed blurred, the words ran into each other, or when he did succeed in reading them, seemed utterly unintelligible, so he folded the paper, found a cab, and drove home. There, in the quiet of his own room, and with nerves somewhat steadied by a glass or two of wine, he sat down to read the further chapters of the awful event of which he had been a witness in the early morning.

He read that the murdered man was a

Mr. Silas Jephson, a well-known man on change, and a financial agent in a very large way. He had been found in the morning by one of the housemaids, but beyond a short sketch of the man's career and an allusion to the impenetrable mystery that surrounded his end the account did not go, further particulars being promised in a later edition.

Denning had thus early begun to feel the terrible oppression of the position in which he stood, a position that he had rendered still more embarrassing by the felonious—and he winced when that word occurred to him—abstraction of the Professor's bill, and the thought of that document brought to his recollection the fact that he was still carrying it about in his pocket-book.

He cast about for some suitable place to bestow it, and finally selected an old-fashioned oak desk, that had been his father's, and which contained a secret drawer of whose existence none, so far as he could tell, knew but himself.

He had just deposited it, and had put the desk back into its usual place, when his old housekeeper—the only retainer, in fact, that his modest ménage boasted—tapped at the door, and handed him a note that had come from the Professor. It was a pressing invitation to dinner for that evening, and it entreated him to come and celebrate two happy events; to wit, his own happy and brilliant discovery and the Professor's release from the shackles of debt.

He had been better pleased had he been asked to go to the North Pole, or some equally uninhabited region; but he knew his would-be host's impetuous nature so well that he felt convinced that the Professor would come hunting for him, unless he either speedily accepted the invitation or sent some plausible excuse.

With the thought that at least he would see Valentine and note how she bore herself, he scrawled a few words of acceptance, and as inaction was unbearable, he took the note and went out to find some messenger. Then a better idea occurred to him. If he called at Brook Place about four o'clock he would, most probably, find Valentine alone, and events might so shape themselves that he would get the opportunity of coming to an understanding with her, and of restoring her ear-ring.

To kill time, he strolled into a restaurant,

and went through the ceremony—for it was no better—of luncheon. All round him there was but one topic of conversation, the Clapham murder, and he was heartily glad to escape into the streets again; but his ears were speedily reassailed with the news-vendors' cries. He bought another paper, only to find that the additional items concerning

the murder were to the effect that the police were very reticent—probably for the sufficient reason that they had nothing to tell—and that the affair had been placed in the hands of the ablest men of Scotland Yard. He whiled away the time somehow until four o'clock, and he had to stand on the door-step at Brook Place some seconds before he could make sure of sufficient self control to ask, in a steady voice, if Miss Valentine were in. "Yes, Miss Valentine was in. Would he go up to the drawing-room?"

CHAPTER IV.

WILFRED'S WOOING.

THE soft light, the cool air and the delicate perfume of the flowers that were scattered about in all parts of the room, made it seem like paradise after the hot streets: and the figure that came to meet him, with outstretched hand, might have been that of an angel, so lovely did she look in the loose white gown that she had donned.



"FATHER HAS TOLD ME EVERYTHING."

"I am more than pleased to see you, Mr. Denning," she began, in a pretty, impetuous way that she must have inherited from the Professor. "Father has told me everything, and I cannot find words to thank you for your princely generosity. I—I—am sure we are deeply grateful to you, and— and —"

She was beginning to break

down already. Denning could see the tears that were rising in her eyes, and he longed to take her in his arms, and tell her that everything he had was hers, to do with as she listed.

"Please never mention the matter again, Miss Dallaston," he said. "I shall rate the Professor soundly, when I see him, for having bothered you with business matters at all. Now, if you really are grateful, give me a cup of tea à la Russe, for I know you have it so this hot weather."

Truth to tell, tea was an abomination to him in any form, but had the beverage been salt water, he had welcomed it for the sake of the diversion that the mere asking for it created.

So there those two sat with that awful secret weighing them down, each of them haunted by the memory of the man sitting in his stark stillness at the head of his own table.

Denning made some inane remark about the weather, prophesied a thunderstorm, and predicted some other cataclysm of nature, equally absurd; and he

felt distinctly relieved when the maid tapped at the door, and entered.

She held something in her hand. "The evening paper, miss," she said, handing it to Valentine.

Denning saw her grow pale, and then flush crimson to the roots of her hair, and he could mark the eager start she made to clutch the paper; nor was the effort to repress her eagerness the less painful to him, because she made it so successfully.

She laid down the paper on the couch beside her, and even from where he was sitting he could see that it was so folded that the account of the murder was uppermost.

He remembered his own impatience to read what was written there, and in mercy to Valentine he took out an envelope, and asking her to excuse him, walked away to a little distance, and made as though he were reading a letter.

He could see her every movement in the pier glass that fronted him, and her look of horror deepened as she read—for she had taken up the paper at once—and he could see that every detail of the sight that she had witnessed in that room was brought to her mind with terrible distinctness.

Presently she put the paper down, and giving her a minute or so in which to regain her composure, Denning folded up his letter and went back to her.

With an ashen face and quivering lips, she forced herself to speak, and at once recurred to the subject of the loan, and the great help it would be to her father.

Denning could bear the strain no longer. He could not stand by and see her suffer so cruelly. At the risk of being misunderstood, at the risk of having a mercenary interpretation put upon his actions, he took her hand.

"Give me the right to help him always," he said. "Be my wife, Valentine, and let me be his son."

She rose from her seat and drew herself up to her full height; her eyes flashed like jewels even in that soft light; she snatched her hand from his; and he knew that the risk he had feared of being misunderstood was a risk that had become a reality.

Her words struck him speechless.

"Are you bidding for me too?"

There was such loathing and contempt, not only in her accents, but in her every look and action, that he quailed before her. He put up his hand to shut out the sight of her face, that had almost lost its beauty in the intensity of her passion.

Then like a flash a light broke in upon him. He knew the secret of her visit to that house in Coats Road, and he felt that for their future happiness, he must speak out now, no matter how he pained her. He must let her know at once that he too had been a witness of the scene that had so terrified her, and he felt that the most sudden way would be the most merciful way.

"Am I a Silas Jephson," he said, "that I should stoop to do so mean a thing?"



"ARE YOU BIDDING FOR ME TOO?"

Had he had full time to reflect, the words had never escaped him, and scarce had they passed his lips when he saw how easily they might be construed into a threat, and at no moment of his life had he so palpably laid himself open to a charge of meanness as when accusing another of that very fault.

Had he struck her with his clenched hand, he had not made her reel more surely. The colour died out of her face even to her very lips. He sprang forward to catch her, but in an instant she recovered.

"Don't touch me," she cried, "you—you—coward! Go and tell the whole town that I went to see the murdered man! Go and tell the police that I murdered him. Go, go!" and, sinking into a low chair, she sobbed as though her heart were breaking.

He waited to speak until the first burst of her grief had subsided.

"For God's sake, Valentine," he said, "don't let us misunderstand each other now. It was by the merest chance that I saw you rush out of the house. I was sitting in the shrubbery, and I called to you when you got into the cab." And as briefly as possible he told her all that had happened up to the finding of her ear-ring in the inner room.

At that point she looked up for the first time. At that point she interrupted him.

"But I never was in any but the one room. Good Heavens, don't you see what you are accusing me of?"

She was standing now facing him, her eyes again ablaze with passion.

"Have pity on yourself," he pleaded, "if you will not have pity on me."

"Don't you see," she went on, scarcely heeding him; "don't you see that if I went into that inner room at all, I must have gone there to hide, so that I could slip out and kill—kill! Oh! it's horrible!"

"Valentine," cried Denning, "for the love of Heaven stop! Hear me. If an angel were your accuser, I should believe that you know nothing of this murder. Forgive me, for I shall never forgive myself. I was a brute to break it to you as I did; but, God knows, I did it for the best. As I live, I found your ear-ring in the inner room."

Something in the tone of his voice carried conviction with it. By a great

effort, she got the better of her emotion and sat down.

"Let us go over the matter quietly," she said.

Denning sat down beside her and told her again all that had happened.

"Do you know," she said, "I thought I heard a slight noise in some other room, but I was so terrified and so fascinated by what I saw, that for some time I could not move. How long I really stood there I can't tell, but, presently, the one idea of getting away unseen took possession of me, and I rushed out of the place. How can you account for my ear-ring being where you found it?"

Her question showed Denning that she believed him.

"You must have dropped it on the table," he answered, "and, after you ran away, whoever was hiding in the other room, slipped out, found it and got back just as I entered."

Then he told her of the bill he had brought away. "Did you know," he asked, "that there was such a document?"

"Yes," she answered slowly and with downcast eyes. "I knew because—because my father had told me about it. I knew because I went there to get it. I feel I owe you some explanation for what I said to you, but I hardly feel equal to it now. Will you come some other time—to-morrow—and—and——" She was growing whiter every second; her lips went on moving but no sounds came; and just as she was falling, Denning caught her, and there she lay in his arms as though she were dead. He placed her gently on the couch, and taking some water from the vases, bathed her hands and temples.

Presently, a faint tinge came back to her lips and cheeks. Twice or thrice she sighed deeply, her eyelids fluttered open and her glorious eyes looked full into his.

In that brief interval of unconsciousness all the terror and passion had faded out of them, and in their place had come a world of tenderness, such as he had never seen in them before.

Her lips moved. He bent closer to her and heard her whisper,

"Will you forgive me, Wilfred?" And for answer his lips met hers, and so their troth was plighted.

"Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands," and they wandered in their garden of Eden, until the clock, chiming the hour of five,

drove them from it; and there arose between them and it, like a two-edged, flaming sword, the recollection of what they had gone through and the dread of what they yet might have to undergo.

CHAPTER V.

BOB MELLARS.

IN the last few minutes before he left Valentine, Denning decided that he should bring her the ear-ring when he came to dinner, and as he had committed the blunder—and a terrible blunder it now appeared to him—of taking the bill, it seemed best to be rid of it as speedily as possible, either by destroying it at once or by handing it over to the police.

In the latter case he felt he had an awkward explanation to make, so awkward, indeed, that the very making of it would render his arrest a matter of great probability; but, strong in the consciousness of his innocence and in Valentine's love, he declared his intention of giving it up. Then he yielded to the girl's pleading for one night's respite. She was so worn out with all she had gone through; she had so much more to tell him, for their time had not been wasted in explanations; so unfit to face the ordeal of a public examination, for she vowed that when his story was told, her's should be told, too, that he gave way.

When he reached home, he found ensconced in an easy-chair, and smoking his favourite pipe, a personage, who, for the prominent part he played in subsequent events, merits a few words of description.

His name was Bob Mellars—at least, he always signed himself Bob, to the few scrawls that he now and again found energy enough to write. From the top of his large but well-shaped head to the sole of his broad foot, he was a typical John Bull, and his jolly red face bore silent testimony—nor did he deny the soft impeachment—that he was a worshipper at the shrine of John Barleycorn. Not that he was by any means a sot or a drunkard, for, except on the very rarest occasions, no one had ever seen him overcome by the potations in which he indulged, and no matter the time or place, he could always carry the six-foot-one of his solid frame as straight as a line, and had full possession of such faculties as

nature had bestowed upon him, albeit, it was the current opinion that in this matter Dame Nature had been somewhat grudging.

Those who knew him best, however, and Denning was one of the few, recognised the fact that had he chosen to improve his talents, he might easily have shone in any branch he had been pleased to take up.

Denning had watched him in the laboratory, and it was there the two men had struck up a friendship, working without book or reference, for in matters of detail his memory was prodigious. Always good tempered, always willing to do whatever he was asked—and he rarely seemed to have anything to work at on his own account—he was a general favourite, and everyone knew that his big body carried a big heart. He had all along been deeply interested in Denning's work; indeed, much more so than anyone but the Professor, and he often dropped in, as he had done now, to see how he was getting on, and whether he had completed his arrangements for "blowing up creation."

"Don't move, dear boy," said Denning on his entrance, as Bob prepared to up-rear his solid frame. "Don't move, you look so comfortable; you only want some beer to set you up. I'll ring for some, and then I'll give you just half-an-hour, for I'm going to dine with the Professor."

Bob's twinkling blue eyes seemed to look Denning through and through.

"Nice girl—Valentine—isn't she?" he asked in the softest tones of his pleasant voice. "Don't you think so, Denning?"

For the life of him, Denning could not keep back the blush that was making his face to the full as red as his friend's, and so turning his back upon him, he rang the bell for the beer.

Mellars had held his beer up betwixt his eye and the light, had pronounced the colour excellent, and was on the point of putting himself in a position to pronounce an opinion on its flavour, when Denning stopped him.

"Wait a minute, Bob!" said he. "You must wish me luck; I've succeeded in——"

"Has she accepted you, my boy?" roared Mellars. "I give you joy."

"Don't be such a fool," said Denning. "I was going to tell you that I am in a fair way to astonish the natives. I have perfected my explosive."



"MY BOY, KEEP THE SECRET TO YOURSELF."

This brought the other out of his chair with a bound that shook the room; and it was a curious fact that Mellars' voice was ludicrously like his step. There were times when his tread made the stoutest floor tremble, and yet, when he chose, he could slip across a room as lightly as any fairy; and so with his voice, for when he chanted a stave he made the rafters ring, and yet you might hear him sometimes talking to a tiny patient in the children's ward in a voice so soft and musical that an angel would have paused to listen.

He gave Denning the benefit, on this occasion, of his loudest diapason, and his roaring congratulations would have put a bull of Bashan to discomfiture to have produced the like rich, rolling volume of sound.

Like the Professor, he was loud in his praises of the work Denning had done, and he prophesied all sorts of good things for him; but when he had done with commendation, he took up the serious side of the matter, and Denning had good reason afterwards, as you will see, to rank him amongst the prophets.

"My boy," said he, in the heavy-father style, "my boy, keep the secret to yourself. Don't lecture on it, for all the world to learn it. Do you know"—and here he

laid his hand impressively on Denning's shoulder—"do you know that there are devils abroad who would stop at nothing to get it out of you? Read your papers, my boy, and then picture the delight of these bomb-fiends if they could get hold of an explosive as strong as hell, as easy to handle as a pistol, and perfectly safe—as far as their own precious skins are concerned. If I were you, Denning, I should make every detail of my method a matter of memory, and I should burn every note and scrap of paper that gives any inkling of it. If these Anarchist chaps once get scent of your secret, they'll have it out of you, if they put you on the rack for it." And swallowing the last of the beer, he gave Denning a solemn, ponderous nod, and made for the door. Before he reached it, however, he turned, and in his gentlest tones enquired: "What's this murder they're calling in the streets?"

"Oh, I don't know," Denning managed to blurt out.

"Haven't you got a paper?" asked Bob. "The boy I met was sold out. You're not like me, Denning," he went on. "Do you know, I fancy I must be a relation of that Italian fellow in the play—Don't you remember we saw it years ago at the Court? 'Mur-r-der! Oh, how I do lof a mur-r-der!' But there, I'll go and get a paper. You've something else to think about besides murders. Good-bye; stick to your secret," and he closed the door gently and made off.

"Why on earth," Denning thought, "did he, in his innocence, remind me of that terrible sight? Why, when there were so many pleasant things to think about, should I have had thrust upon me the horrors of that early morning?"

When he had finished dressing, he went to the desk for the ear-ring, and his hand trembled as he accidentally touched the blood-stained paper that lay beside it.

How heartily he wished that he had never set eyes on the accursed thing; and he was in no wise sparing in the epithets he applied to himself for ever having meddled with it at all.

Still, he had given his promise to Valentine that he would take no steps in the matter until the morrow; and determining

to make the most of what seemed likely to be his last happy night for some time to come, he folded the ornament in the piece of cigarette paper, and slipping it into his pocket, went off to his dinner.

He had arranged to be at Brook Place early enough to hear from Valentine the explanation that she had promised of her visit to Jephson's house, and it can be readily understood how eager he was to hear it, and how slowly his cab seemed to crawl. It wanted more than half an hour to the time arranged by the Professor when he arrived, and brushing past the servant who opened the door to him, and without waiting to hear something she tried to say to him, he went up the stairs two at a time and pushed open the drawing-room door, and then, to his chagrin, found that Valentine was not alone.

Alan Trenman was with her, and at a glance he saw that he was—at least, so far as the gentleman was concerned—an unwelcome intruder.

By the time, however, that Denning had shaken hands with Valentine, and had turned to Trenman, every trace of annoyance that the latter might have felt had disappeared, and he greeted Denning effusively.

"Lo! the hero himself," he cried, as he shook hands. "So you're going to set the Thames on fire at last, Wilfred? The Professor has told me of your triumph, and please accept my heartiest congratulations."

It was altogether a day of embarrassments for Denning, and he could only stammer out his thanks, in somewhat unintelligible form; and, though at first he was annoyed enough at Trenman for his unwelcome presence, he presently came to be grateful to him for the ready tact with which he brought up subjects of conversation in which they could all join. He even showed some interest in Denning's theory as to the electrical state of the atmosphere, a topic to which he had recourse again to bridge over some awkward lapse into silence, and they were in full accord as to the state of the weather when the Professor entered, followed by no less a personage than Bob Mellars.

"I found him mooning about the streets," said the old gentleman to his daughter, "and I promised him that you would welcome him, even though he hadn't the orthodox garments—and now,

that you have so opportunely turned up, Trenman, you must stay and dine with us too."

It was useless for Trenman to make excuses, for the Professor would have none of them; and so, instead of the comfortable party of three, to which Denning had been looking forward, they went down five to dinner; but their host was in such good spirits that the meal passed off pleasantly enough.

During its progress a change came over Mellars. His red face glowed with more than its customary colour, and it was evident that Bob had employed the short interval since he had seen Denning in something more than looking upon the beer when it was foaming.

When Valentine left them, he rose and proposed his friend Denning's health in eulogistic terms, his great body swaying to and fro in a way that threatened destruction to the Professor's plate and glass; but he managed to steer clear of accidents, and Denning felt relieved when he sat down.

The men made no long tarrying over their wine, and Trenman whispered to Denning, as they left the room: "That old fool, Mellars, is half seas over. Why doesn't he go home?" But Bob had no such intention, and beyond missing a few steps on the stairs, and nearly falling headlong through the drawing-room door, he managed to anchor himself, without further mishap, in an armchair in the far corner of the room; and there, to Valentine's disgust, he presently gave palpable evidence that the cares and worries of this world concerned him not, except in so far as they might trouble his slumbers.

"Now, Trenman," said the Professor, "favour us with one of your songs before the coffee comes up. Do, please."

Trenman sat down at the piano, and ran his fingers over the keys with the air of a practised musician. The Professor stood beside him, and, catching Valentine's eye, Denning glanced at the far corner of the room where Bob had deposited himself, and moved towards it.

His lady-love was not slow in following him, and disregarding alike Mellars' minstrelsy and Trenman's tenor, they were soon busy whispering their confidences.

"Have you brought my ear-ring?" she asked.

He took the little parcel from his pocket, and, unfolding the paper, gave

her the ornament. As she took it the piece of paper fell upon the floor, but they were far too much occupied with their confidences to pick it up.

"We can't talk now," Valentine said; "we must wait until to-morrow morning. Come round at nine. Father is going out early, and we shall not be interrupted. Is the paper all right?"

"Yes, quite right," Denning replied. "But can't you tell me in a few words why you went there last night?"

"Not now, Wilfred. Wait till the morning; I have something more to tell you," and she glanced towards Trenman in an embarrassed manner.

Denning saw that it was useless to attempt any exchange of confidences under the circumstances, and so they both went back in time to thank Trenman for his song; and the coffee coming up almost immediately, they aroused Mellars, and his excuses were so elaborate and profuse that it was decidedly a relief when he presently recollected a pressing engagement and took himself off.

Then Trenman, after another song, also bade them good-night; and Denning saw his way to a happy quarter of an hour with the Professor, and an opportunity of hearing from Valentine the explanation of that mysterious visit, and also any ideas she might have as to how Silas Jephson came to so awful an end.

He took the old gentleman downstairs just as he was about to settle himself comfortably for his postprandial

nap, and in the little "den" he told him of his love for his daughter, and asked his consent to an early marriage.

For answer the Professor shook him warmly by the hand, and, with tears in his eyes, was good enough to say that he could wish for no better husband for his dear one.

"Go up to her, Wilfred," he said; "I'll come presently."

When he joined the happy pair he went and stood beside them, and leaning on Denning's shoulder, he bent over and kissed his daughter's forehead; and laying his hand caressingly on her pretty head, he said simply: "May God bless you, my dear one, and make you and Wilfred as happy as your dear mother and I were. Good-night." And with the tact and courtesy of the perfect gentleman that he ever was, he left them to themselves.

In his heart Denning fervently cried

"Amen" to the prayer, and for some minutes they sat in silence.

Then Valentine began her story.



THEN TRENMAN ALSO BADE THEM GOOD-NIGHT.

CHAPTER VI. VALENTINE'S STORY.

"I HARDLY know how to tell you of the events that led up to my last night's horrible adventure," Valentine began. "It seems that father had been in Jephson's power for some time; but I never knew it until about a fortnight ago. You remember the — Bank failure about three years ago? Well, the greater part of our money

was lost then, and father was at that time carrying out some costly experiments that he was very loth to give up, and so he drifted to the city in search of funds, and there met with Jephson. We ought not to speak ill of the dead, if we can help it, and especially of one who died as he did; but I never did like the man, and I used to wonder at first why father brought him home so often, and why he should like to come and see us. I was not long left in the dark as to the motive of his visits, for it was very plain that he came to—to—see me; but he guarded his secret so carefully from father that he never suspected him, and his manner to me was always so deferential that I could find no excuse for complaint; and, thinking that he must, in some way, be of great service, his visits went on with no word of dissent from me. Just a fortnight ago, I saw from father's manner that something was wrong; and with a great deal of coaxing, I got it out of him, and was horror-struck to find that he was completely in Jephson's power, and that, in fact, he owed him three thousand pounds, and that a very early settlement had been requested. We were very wretched and miserable, for we could see no way out of our difficulty, and, as a last resource, I had made up my mind to see the man and ask him to come to some easier terms. I wrote to him, and, last Saturday I received a letter from him, delivered by hand, and requesting an immediate answer. There was to be a dance at Mrs. Albany's on Monday night, and knowing that we were very intimate friends, and that I was sure to have been asked, he suggested that I should go to the dance, leave it at twelve o'clock, and drive to his house at Coats Road. At no other time and in no other way would he see me; but he promised me that the interview should not last more than a quarter-of-an-hour, and that, whatever the upshot of it might be, he would place my father's release in my hand. There would be no witnesses of our meeting; I could leave my cab in the side street and I should find the hall door ajar. He himself would meet me in the hall, and he promised on his honour that I should never regret it if I placed confidence in him. Little as I know of the world, Wilfred, I yet knew that there must be some motive for his having chosen such a time and place; but, when I saw my dear father's face, and recognised the

fact that the blow, if it fell, would most likely kill him, I made up my mind that I would go to Jephson, and I wrote and told him so."

"One moment, Valentine," Denning interrupted. "Did you ask him to destroy your letter?"

"No, why should I?" asked Valentine. "I wasn't in the least ashamed of what I was going to do, and I left it to him to do what he pleased with it."

"Well, it was a very easy matter to slip away from the dance, and when I reached Jephson's house—having left the cab where you saw it—I found the hall door ajar, and went in. Everything was perfectly quiet, but no one came to meet me, and then I began to get frightened, and thought of running away. However, while I was fighting my fears, I heard someone move in the room on the left. He had, perhaps, not heard me enter, and bracing myself up with the thought that in a quarter of an hour I should hold my dear father's release in my hand, I walked to the door and tapped. Everything was so deadly still that I heard quite plainly, a hurried movement, the rustling of papers, and the gentle closing of a door. I stood with the knob in my hand until I felt a little calmer; then I turned the handle and entered. You know," and here she shuddered, "you know, Wilfred, how dim the light was at the far end of the room, and you know that I saw him sitting just as you saw him. I thought that he was asleep, and I called to him softly. Then I went nearer, and called again, and oh! God! how shall I ever forget my feelings when I touched him with my hand and saw the papers dabbled with —"

"Don't go on, Valentine! don't!" said Denning. "Never mind telling me any more! I know it all, for I saw it all."

She took a few moments to master her agitation.

"I want to tell you all, Wilfred," she went on, "for between us we may hold some clue that may clear up the mystery. How long I stood there, frozen with horror, I can't tell; but at last I was aroused just as you were. Someone moved in that inner room. I dared not shriek, for I almost felt the murderer's fingers on my throat; I groped my way to the door and ran, just as you saw me, from the house. I can't imagine how I had sufficient self-command to tell the

cabman where to take me to, but I ordered him to put me down in Kensington Park Gardens, and presently I took another cab, and leaving it at some distance from our house, I walked home. Then I missed my ear-ring, and you can easily understand how that worried me. And now, dear, tell me what you think of it all."

Denning paused for some time before he replied.

"I think," he said at last, "that I have made a most horrible blunder—two blunders in fact. First, I oughtn't to have touched that paper at all; and, secondly, I ought to have followed you home, and together we ought to have communicated with the police. However, it's no use talking of that now. To-morrow you and I must face the music, as Mr. Potter says, and we must try and be as cheerful as we can, for we know that we had nothing to do with the killing of Jephson. This matter is so terrible," he went on, "that it admits of nothing but the plainest speech. I think, Val" (it was curious how easily the pet name came to him), "I think, Val, that the man wanted to marry you; that he asked you to his home to give you a practical proof of his wealth; and that—and I say it, remembering what you have said of speaking ill of the dead—he thought in some way or other to so compromise you that you would be obliged to accept his proposals. I have not the slightest doubt that both you and I were within an ace of surprising the assassin. He heard you come in, and the rustling of the papers that you noticed was made by him as he turned them over, hunting, no doubt, for some such document as the one I brought away. He must have returned to the room after you ran away, and it was then that he found your ear-ring. My entrance disturbed him afresh. He slipped out into the smoking-room, and when at last I went in there, he got away through the window, having purposely, I suspect, dropped the ear-ring. By Jove! that piece of paper I wrapped it in must have come from one of his cigarettes. Where is it?"

"I noticed it fall to the floor," said Valentine; "but I thought it was some odd scrap or other, and I didn't bother to pick it up."

They carefully hunted over the corner where they had been standing when Denning gave her back the ornament, but

neither there nor in any part of the room could they find a trace of the paper.

"Well, never mind," said Denning, "I have the other half with the tobacco in it locked up with that paper, and that reminds me that I want to say how I think your father should act. We must get him to write to-morrow morning in answer to that letter which came to him after the writer's death, and which must have been sent to give the screw another turn. I don't believe the dear old fellow has heard a word about the murder. You know how utterly absorbed he is, and how little he cares for what goes on in the world outside his own small circle. Well, you must tell him from me to write off first thing to-morrow morning to Jephson, and say that when the bill is due it will be met. Wait a minute! We were nearly making another awful mistake! Of course, all letters coming to Jephson now would be opened by the police. No, he had better let matters rest as they are, and I shall try to have the document given to Jephson's executors, and then write them a cheque for the amount."

"Yes, I think that will be best, Wilfred," said Valentine. "Father is going away early to-morrow morning on some scientific expedition, and as soon as he has started, we will go together and tell all we know."

"I was afraid all the time we were having dinner that either Mellars or Trenman would blurt out something about it," said Denning; and at the mention of Trenman's name, he could not but notice the blush that came to his companion's face, and he soon heard the cause of it.

Denning had interrupted a proposal, and at such a point that Trenman had not received his dismissal, nor had he heard of Valentine's engagement.

Then Denning reminded her of how she had met his advances, and her pretty excuses and shy explanations, and the tears and the remembrance of all that had been crowded into a few short hours led to some tender passages that need not be discussed; but suffice it to say that before he left her, he had comforted her back to calmness; and if the cloud that hung over them seemed black indeed, yet their love had already edged it with a broad silver lining.

CHAPTER VII.

DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES.

It was so pleasant and cool after the hot day, and the walk seemed so likely to quicken and freshen his wits, that Denning determined to stroll quietly along and think matters over. On the morrow the inquest would be held, and then the cleverest men in London would be put on the track, and if human ingenuity could unravel the mystery, unravelled it would be. Denning caught himself wondering how he would set about it. He

in his business books, the state of affairs would be known; and if, further, a certain document were proved to be missing, what a chain had Denning riveted round his dear one! Then there came to him a wild idea to be rid of the paper at once. He could take it to the nearest police station, and there tell his story, and for the matter of that Valentine's name need never be mentioned at all. But there was that letter she wrote to Jephson. Well, come what may, he would no longer delay doing what he ought to have done at first, and with this purpose strong within him, he took the first cab that he came upon and hurried home.

He had forgotten, or lost, his latch-key, and he had to knock several times before he could awake his old housekeeper, and he scarcely gave her time to get upstairs again before he rushed to the desk. To his surprise it opened readily.

Had he been so careless as to leave it unlocked? he wondered.

He pulled out the secret drawer.

It was empty!

The bill and the half cigarette were gone!

* * *

He sat and stared for a long time at the empty drawer. Then he searched the desk again thoroughly, but the paper was nowhere to be found. Everything, with the exception of the

two missing articles, was as he had left it, and whoever had taken these had come for them, and them only. The lock of the desk was an old-fashioned one, and had readily yielded to the pressure put upon it, and he could plainly see on the edge of the lid the marks of the instrument with which it had been forced open. He went upstairs and roused Mrs. Hartley, and learnt that she had been to supper with a friend, and had not reached home again until nearly twelve o'clock. She had seen his latch-key on the mantelpiece, but thinking that he had a second one, she had turned the gas low, and gone to bed.



HE PULLED OUT THE SECRET DRAWER. IT WAS EMPTY!

imagined himself a detective, and all at once there flashed across his mind an idea that almost made him hurry back to Brook Place. What if the cabman were able to give a sufficiently accurate description of Valentine to lead to her identification. Her haste; the peculiar time of her visit; her agitation, which, however much she had controlled herself, must yet have been somewhat noticeable; the locality; all would occur to the driver, and connect her in his mind with the tragedy. Then, if Jephson, as he would most assuredly have done, had entered his transactions with Professor Dallaston

What a position was his now! The man who had killed Silas Jephson must have known that he had taken the paper, and awaiting the opportunity that had come so quickly, had possessed himself of it, and now held it, to produce it at the right moment, and on the right occasion, to prove—what? That the girl who had just given herself to him was a murderess.

He felt that he had need of all his nerve and calmness to think the matter out as collectedly as possible, and when he had done so, and all the facts had been properly arranged, he saw how closely the meshes of the net were drawing around Valentine.

This was how he reasoned. In the stillness of that summer night any one in the inner room could have heard quite plainly the rattle of the cab that carried Valentine away. The cabman would be certain, for reasons already set forth, to remember that he had taken a lady to the neighbourhood of Coats Road. Then came the finding of the ear-ring, and it was borne in upon him irresistibly, that it had been purposely placed where he found it, and in the witness box, and under a skilful cross-examination—for he already saw himself in that predicament—he felt that the truth would out, and that the jury would be most certainly convinced that Valentine had been hiding in the inner room.

Then followed the absence of the paper that proved that Professor Dallaston's ruin, financially speaking, rested with Jephson. He might assert on oath that he had taken it, but who was there to verify his statement, for no one had seen it in his possession, and no one, save the person in hiding and Valentine, knew that he had it. What, moreover, had become of the letter that Valentine wrote to Jephson, arranging to meet him at that unusual hour and under such unusual circumstances? He felt all too keenly now the mistake of concealment. Had he followed Valentine home, insisted upon seeing her, and had they gone together and given information, all might have been well; and had he but left that accursed paper alone—but there, you will be just as wearied, dear reader, with his after-event wisdom and his what-he-should-have-dones as he was himself that dreadful night.

One thing he recognised plainly, and through all his doubts and perplexities it

stayed with him, and that was that he had an antagonist to fight who not only could lay claim to a cunning equal to that of the father of all evil, but who also possessed a nerve of iron, as evinced by the fact that he had returned to the room in which his victim was. He longed for the time to come when he could see Valentine again and tell her of the new and terrible turn affairs had taken; and, pacing up and down the garden in the broad, bright sunshine of the early summer morning, the songs of the birds seemed to mock him, and, turning indoors, he snatched a few hours of fitful sleep.

Nine o'clock found him once more at Brook Place.

He was astounded and bewildered by the news the servant had to tell him. Miss Valentine had been called away into the country by a telegram, and the Professor had left even earlier than his daughter, and was not expected home for some days. Miss Valentine had left a letter for him. He took the letter from the girl, and read it as he walked down the street.

"MY DEAREST WILFRED," it said, "I have just had a telegram to say that dear aunt is dying, and wishes to see me and father at once. Father had been gone some little time when it came, and I don't know where to telegraph for him. It is dreadful to have to go away at such a time, but what can I do? Don't go to the police until I come back, for I could never face them by myself. It appears aunt is at Exeter, where someone will meet me at the station. If father writes to me, the letter will come here to-morrow morning, and as we are to have no secrets from each other now, please open it and telegraph to him the news I shall send you. Don't go to the police till I come back, and do take care of that paper.—Yours ever, VALENTINE."

The fates were against him.

Strong as had been his determination to communicate with the authorities, how could he do so now in the face of those pleading words of the girl he loved. Without her consent—for he felt that she was the person most concerned—he could not take a third party into their confidence, and he could do nothing but eat his heart out with waiting.

The hours dragged on till mid-day, when to his surprise he received a letter from

the Professor, posted, it appeared, on his way to the station. He knew that it must contain important news, for otherwise it had rested in the Professor's pocket until they should meet, and when the old gentleman remembered it—if he ever did so at all—it would be delivered by hand. He gathered from it that the Professor was engaged in some work with another scientist, and that they expected to be in Kent on the Thursday or Friday; and it was proposed that he should run down on the latter day and give his explosive a trial at the works of Messrs. Wall and Co., the world-famed manufacturers.

"I shall see," wrote the Professor, "that the right men are there, and I am already anticipating the triumph in store for you. You can devote to-day and to-morrow to your preparations, and come down by an early train on Friday. Write to me to 'The Bull,' at Sittingbourne, where I expect to be to-morrow evening, and say when you are coming. I know that you will recognise the importance of the event when I tell you that I am almost certain that two very important government officials will be present. Take care of Valentine—though I need hardly tell you to do that—until I come back.

"Yours faithfully,

"W. I. DALLASTON."

Do take care of that paper! Take care of Valentine! Poor Denning had not the remotest idea where either the one or the other was.

* * *

The bewildering events that had happened had put the explosive quite out of Denning's mind; but he was grateful now for the occupation his preparations would give him, and reflecting that he could do nothing further until he saw Valentine, he went to his laboratory to prepare a sufficient quantity of material for a series of experiments. He was in the midst of his work when Mrs. Hartley came to tell him that Mr. Mellons—as she always called him—had come to see him; and then it flashed across his mind—and it was passing strange that he had not thought of it before—that the inquest was probably over; and remembering how Bob loved a tragedy, he felt sure that he should hear full particulars. It was well for him that this idea occurred to him, for it gave him a few minutes wherein to school his nerves,

and to steady himself for any startling revelations he might be about to hear.

They were startling!

Bob had heard every word of the evidence. He knew exactly the size of the wound and the style of weapon that had produced it, and with eyes aglow and face redder than ever, he related that a cabman had come forward and given evidence of having driven a lady, sometime after midnight, to a street off Coats Road. The lady had ordered him to wait, and in about ten minutes' time she had come running back and ordered him to drive her to Kensington Park Gardens. He did so, and the lady paid him and disappeared. Some other facts he added: Just as the lady was entering the cab to return, he heard someone call out, and, turning round, saw a man at the corner of the street. The lady pushed up the trap and told him to drive as fast as he could, and, thinking that she might be wishing to escape impertinent attentions, he had driven off at a rate that prevented pursuit. He was able to give a pretty full description of his fare, and was positive that he should know her again.

"What do you think of that for a clue, Denning? I tell you what, if the girl was fool enough to take another cab, I wouldn't mind betting that they find her, and know all about her in less than four-and-twenty hours. My opinion is, however, that she probably had a carriage handy, and if she can trust her coachman she'll be all right. Oh, I forgot to say cabby said she was in evening dress, with a wrapper over her head and shoulders; so she must have been at some party, or perhaps the theatre. What's your idea, Denning?"

"My dear chap," Denning replied, with as great a show of indifference as he could assume, "I've told you that such things don't interest me in the least. Let's leave it to the detectives. What was the verdict?"

"Verdict!" cried Mellars, evidently pitying the other's ignorance. "They haven't come to that yet: they've adjourned the inquiry for a week, so that, amongst other things, they can examine Jephson's books and papers. It appears that he had a bundle of papers on the table in front of him, and from the way they were tumbled about, it looked as if someone had been hunting through them. Don't you see? if it can be proved that any documents are missing, an explana-

tion would be demanded from the parties interested—*cherchez la femme*, I say, and when you've found her, you'll not be far from the person who did for Jephson."

"Hold on, Bob!" said Denning, "you haven't any beer. I'll run and get you some." And, thankful for the short respite, he ran to the cellar, and, with trembling hands, drew the liquor, wondering within himself how it would be if he should trust Bob, and tell him all.

But, remembering that he was only a partner in the secret, and that it concerned Valentine even more than himself, he determined to make no confidant until he saw her, and that when he did speak, it should be to someone 'having authority,' and not to the good-natured, easy-going man who was waiting for his beer, and whom he found, when he got back to the room, examining the oak desk.

"Hallo," said Bob. "What a jolly old desk! You've broken the lock! How did you manage that?"

Denning began to wish Bob at Jericho; but at last he stopped his conversation with a draught of the favourite beverage, and before he could ask any more questions or exploit any further theories, he got him on the topic of the explosive, and promised to take him to see the trial; and with that promise, and on the plea of work to be done, he got rid of him.

Denning, however, was completely unsettled for work, and so he went out and strolled about the streets, and got through the afternoon as best he could, until he thought it time to go home and wait for Valentine's telegram. It came in due course, but there had evidently been some mistake about the delivery, for it was brought by a stranger, and across the back of the envelope was written "opened by mistake." Its contents were anything but satisfactory from one point of view. It ran as follows: "Aunt much better. Sudden attack passed off. Shall be home as soon as possible. Do not trouble father." There was no address, and it had apparently been handed in at the Exeter Post-office. It was unsatisfactory to Denning, for although it was now highly important that he should get Valentine home as soon as possible, he had not the remotest idea as to where he should send a telegram. He felt that he was hopelessly stranded, and once more seeking relief in work, he toiled on through

the greater part of the night, and set everything in order for what he would, three days before, have looked upon as the greatest event in his life.

There was no letter from the Professor the next morning (Thursday), nor had Valentine written to her father; and, stranger still, no word came from her to Denning until late in the forenoon, when he received another telegram from Exeter, saying that she was on her way home, and would be with them the next day, mentioning the train by which she was coming. Denning felt that he must go down and carry out the matter arranged by the Professor, and so he wrote Valentine a long letter explaining his unavoidable absence; and having left this at Brook Place, he hurried home, and, getting his things together, started for Sittingbourne in the afternoon. He sent Mellars a line advising him by what train to come down, and he felt heartily glad when he had left London and its horrors behind him. To such a state had he come that he was almost afraid to meet a policeman; and a stranger who asked him the time as he was crossing the park must have thought him demented, so confused was he.

Denning was very pleased to find the Professor in high spirits at the anticipated triumph, and his pleasure was further enhanced by a communication from the War Office to the effect that two distinguished men from the department would be present.

The Professor was somewhat disconcerted when Denning showed him his daughter's telegrams; but as his sister's attack had apparently passed away, and as Valentine was to be home so soon, any anxiety he had felt soon passed off. Denning was delighted to find that the Professor knew nothing of the murder, for his work, and the scientific matters incidental to it, had so absorbed his attention that murders and mysteries had been to him and his friend as things that were not.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIAL OF THE EXPLOSIVE.

THE morning broke fine and clear, and the bracing breeze that blew from the sea, aided by the excitement of a trial such as they were about to make, would have swept away all Denning's gloomy thoughts had they been capable of removal.

There was a goodly company present to witness the experiments, amongst them Bob Mellars, and also—to Denning's great surprise—Alan Trenman. It appeared that Bob had met him the day before and had painted the glory that was awaiting their friend in such glowing colours, that the man about town had for once forsaken his beloved haunts and had come to witness the "blow-up."

"I was the first to laugh at you, Wilfred," said Trenman, when he and Denning met, "when you made your *début* as an explosionist, and, please the pigs, I shall be the first to congratulate you when the mine explodes to-day."

From the two great men of the party Denning received a recognition that would have flattered his vanity, had he not known that any notice they deigned to bestow upon him at present was bestowed because he was under the wing of Professor Dallaston; and the deference they paid to that gentleman's views showed Denning how widespread was the respect in which his learning and opinions were held. It was first necessary to demonstrate that neither of the two substances into which Denning had separated his explosive possessed any dangerous properties when employed by itself, and, having succeeded in doing this, he had next to bring them together by some suitable arrangement and show the terrible force generated by their contact. He had labelled the fluids No. 1 and No. 2, and, choosing the former, he submitted it to the various tests suggested by the Professor and by Sir Abel Collins. Electrical discharges, concussion, heat, chemical re-agents of all kinds, produced no more effect upon it than they would upon water. And so it was with fluid No. 2. He had certainly succeeded in generating two of the most harmless substances possible, and to the full as innocent as they looked; and having proved this to the entire satisfaction of the assembled savants, it behoved him to explain his method of bringing about an explosion.

These methods he styled the Wet and the Dry. In the former, matters were so arranged that the two fluids came into contact as fluids; in the latter, some suitable substance was moistened with liquid No. 2; and even when this had apparently dried, the effect would be precisely the same as in the first case, when the substance that had been moistened was dipped into No. 1.

An experiment on a large scale had been arranged for the demonstration of the wet method.

At the mouth of what is euphemistically called a river, but which, at low water, sinks into the insignificance of a creek, stand the powder mills of Messrs. Wall and Co., and that particular part of the coast upon which this muddy stream debouches abounds in sand banks and beds of ooze that stretch away to a great distance when the tide has run out. In one of the largest of these masses of mud, a deep hole had been scooped, and when the tide had sufficiently covered it, Denning was rowed out, and at the spot indicated by a pole on which fluttered a red flag, he deposited, with the greatest care, several pounds' weight of the materials for the explosion, in two jars, one within the other, and both inclosed in a water-tight box.

Swinging clear of the liquid in the larger jar was a little machine of Denning's own invention, consisting of a hammer resting upon the smaller jar and connected with clockwork, so arranged that, at a given moment, the hammer would be raised and a blow given of sufficient force to shatter the glass upon which it fell. The two fluids would thus be brought into immediate contact; and Denning had so arranged matters that this would take place in two hours time, so that there should be a considerable depth of water over the spot, and the effect of the experiment be thus heightened.

He had, of course, given no hint whatever as to the nature of the substances he employed; but he was not so particular in speaking of the mechanical arrangements, and several of his hearers took copious notes, Trenman being especially assiduous in doing so.

As for the Professor, he had slipped quite unconsciously into the part of Master of the Ceremonies, nor did anyone for a moment seem inclined to dispute that position with him. He ordered the men about as though they had been his laboratory assistants, nor was Mr. Wrench, the genial manager, above putting his hand to certain tasks when bidden to do so.

As for Denning, the Professor treated him in a manner that was so subtle a blending of the father and the teacher that it was impossible to make out where one character ended and the other began.

Denning proposed to employ the interval that must elapse before the large mine exploded in showing how the dry method worked, and when he had explained this, they all proceeded some half mile or so up the river to a disused quarry. A small quantity of the fluid No. 1 had been poured into a bottle fitted with a perforated cork. Through the hole in the cork a piece of wood moistened with No. 2 had been passed, and the clockwork that fitted the neck of the bottle was so arranged as to drive the stick home at a set time.

Placing the bottle against a mass of rock at the bottom of the quarry and allowing an interval of five minutes, they retreated to a safe distance and waited, watches in hand, behind a huge boulder.

The clockwork was true to the second, and the sound of the explosion was still re-echoing from side to side of the river when Trenman gripped Denning's hand. They ran hurriedly to the quarry, and the agility of youth seemed to come back to the Professor's legs as, regardless of dignity, he skipped over the stones and led the way.

The experiment was a success in every sense of the word. The huge stone against which the explosive had been

placed was smashed and pulverised in a manner that showed to the full the awful power of the agent.

Sir Abel Collins was particularly warm in his praises of the manner in which the work of destruction had been effected, and he at once drew Denning's attention to the great future before him if he could adapt his discovery to the formation of cartridges suitable for big guns; and these suggestions and discussions served to while away the time until but a few minutes of the two hours had to run.

The breeze that had been so fresh in the early morning had died down in the heat of the sun to the very gentlest of zephyrs, that blew in most fitful fashion. Scarcely a ripple disturbed the surface of the ocean, and here and there were great patches of oily calm.

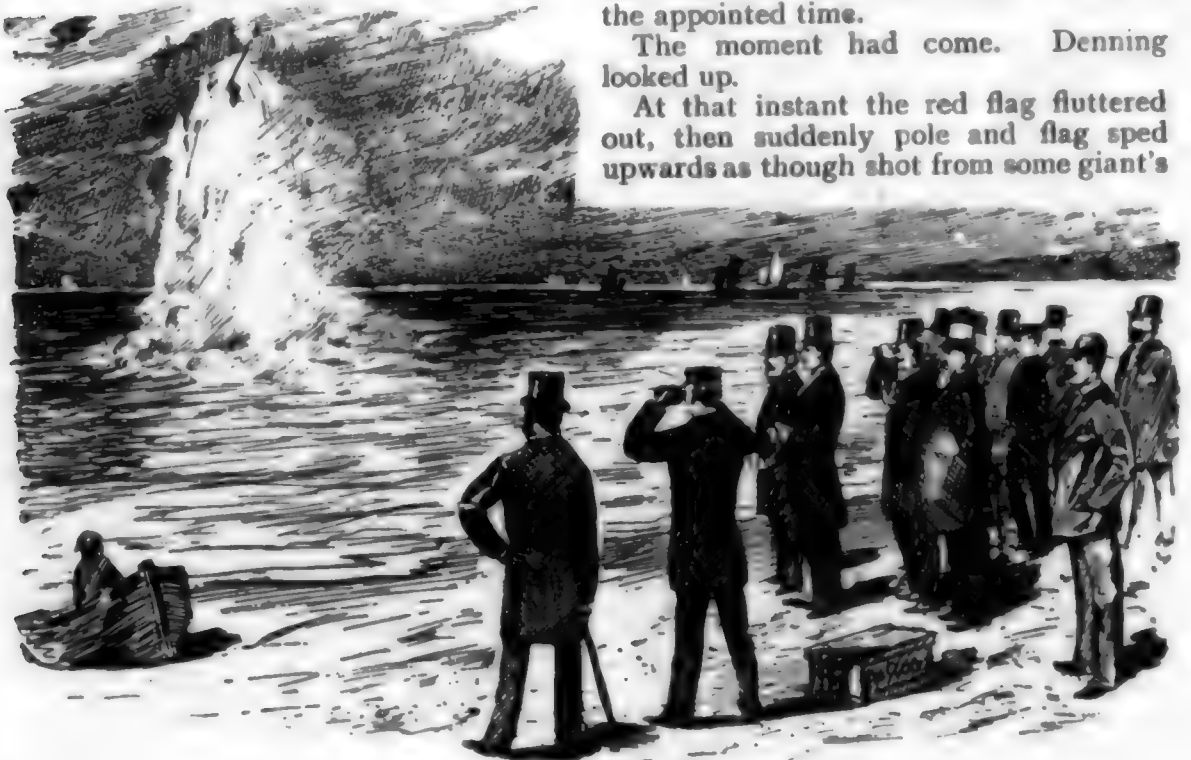
Above the spot where the jars lay hidden, the wheeling sea-birds hovered, and ever and anon their breasts and wings flashed gleaming white.

Away in the offing lay a few craft, but at such a distance as to be well out of harm's way.

In the silence that had fallen upon the company, in the strange noonday hush of the elements, Denning could almost hear the beating of his heart as the hand of his watch stood but two seconds short of the appointed time.

The moment had come. Denning looked up.

At that instant the red flag fluttered out, then suddenly pole and flag sped upwards as though shot from some giant's



THE MOMENT HAD COME.

bow, and there came to their ears the roar of the detonation, as a huge dome of water uprose for a moment ere it drifted away like a white veil, in which there glittered and sparkled the hues of a thousand rainbows. Surging shoreward, came a solid wall of water that, overrunning the very highest tidemark, still raced on, nor spent its strength until it washed the very stones at their feet.

Back it swept, but not again to the old channel, for between them and the spot whence it had started there had uprisen a huge barrier of ooze and sand that barred its outward progress; and on either side of which it ran away like two racing rivers; while out to sea sped a huge and ever increasing arc of wave that presently set the distant boats curtseying in a way that made their sails wave and gleam in the glorious sunshine.

* * *

The last roll of the reverberation had died away before a word was spoken. Mellars's deep bass broke the charmed silence.

"It was sublime!" was all he said; and then there broke upon Denning a perfect shower of congratulations, in the midst of which they went in to the sumptuous luncheon that the manager had provided.

Of course there was the inevitable speech-making, and Denning was heartily glad that everyone was so eager to air his opinion as to the merits of the discovery he had made, that his share of the proceedings was limited to a brief return of thanks to the officials for their presence, and to his friends for the handsome things they said of him.

Now that the excitement was over, he was longing to get back to town and see Valentine, but he failed to communicate any of his eagerness to the Professor, who went on from rhapsody to rhapsody, looking into the future "far as human eye could see."

Mellars and Trenman travelled up to town with them, and the last words of the former were a repetition of the warning he had already given Denning. "Stick to your secret like wax," he said, "and don't let any of those Anarchist fiends get hold of it."

Trenman assured him, as he bade good-bye, that he had wired up a full, true and particular account of the day's

proceedings to several of the papers, and left him with a laugh on his handsome face, and the prediction that to-morrow he would awake to find himself famous.

Of a truth Denning's heart "outran his footsteps," and he had hoped that Valentine would be in the hall to welcome them, but they passed into the dining-room and saw no sign of her.

"Where's Miss Valentine?" asked the Professor.

Miss Valentine had not returned, neither had she sent any message; and they could only conjecture that she must have missed her train, or that something had occurred at the last moment to alter her plans.

"We shall hear from her in the morning, Wilfred," said the Professor; "or, perhaps, there may be a letter or telegram at your house. If so, send it on to me." And promising to do so, and declining his offer of hospitality, Denning left him to his diary, the keeping of which was the one methodical act of his life.

There was no message from Valentine when he reached home, and he fell a-thinking of the hundred and one accidents that might have befallen her, until he reduced himself to the lowest depths of misery, from which he was aroused by Mrs. Hartley's announcement that a gentleman wished to see him.

The card she gave him bore the name Comte de Baillard. He neither knew nor had ever heard of such a personage, but he bade his housekeeper show him into the room where he was.

"What if he were a detective?" was the thought that flashed through Denning's mind as he heard the man's footsteps in the passage; and as the door opened, he half expected to see him waving the stolen paper and to hear him presently demanding, with his back to the locked door, how he had come by it.

He was, however, agreeably disappointed.

The Count, evidently a Frenchman, and every inch a gentleman, so far as outward appearance and manners went, was an enthusiast like himself. For years he had been working at the very same branch of chemistry; and reading of Denning's success in the evening paper—a copy of which he had with him—and having been lucky enough to find a friend of his at University College, he had

obtained his address, and had called as a fellow worker to congratulate him.

"It was magnificent," he went on, walking the room excitedly. "Magnificent! I can see the water, monsieur, as it rose and drifted away; and the cr-r-ash of the explosion must have been the grandest music you ever heard. *Mon Dieu!* but it was splendid!"

He spoke English perfectly, but Denning noticed the fact as somewhat surprising, for his actions were exactly those we usually associate with the Frenchman who has not been sufficiently long with us to catch our insular coolness.

"It is but a short account here," said he, waving the paper at Denning, "but even in it there is one thing I should like to ask you about—not, of course, with regard to your materials. I notice that the explosions took place exactly to the second. May I inquire if it is a secret how this was done?"

Denning explained that it was a secret, and with the politeness of his nation, which, however superficial it may be, is yet delightfully refreshing, the Count glided off to some other topic, and presently, leaving the paper, took his departure. Denning caught up the sheet and glanced at it.

There was a short account of the day's doings on the Kentish Coast; and immediately below it, came a paragraph anent the Jephson murder; and so, even in the papers, his triumphs and his troubles were as closely connected as in his life.

He got to his gloomy reverie again; and, torturing himself until he could no longer endure inaction, he caught up his hat and hurried into the streets.

How it came about he knew not, but presently, and after walking to all intents and purposes in an aimless fashion, he found himself close to that dreadful house in Coats Road, and impelled by a desire that he could not control, he walked to the gate through which he had entered on that fatal night, and stood there gazing at the place that once owned Silas Jephson as its master. It was quiet and peaceful enough in the soft summer moonlight, and he had been standing staring at it for some minutes when a hand was laid on his shoulder. He was caught, he thought. Now surely he would be brought to book; and with a face whose pallor would have betrayed him in any other

light, he turned to discover Bob Mel-lars.

"Hallo, Denning! Looking for ghosts?" he cried. "Why, man, you ought to be celebrating your triumphs in the flowing bowl."

And for the next hour, as they walked about, Denning was entertained with a veritable hotch-potch of murder, detectives, explosives, anarchists, clues to be followed up here and papers to be found there, until, worn out with all he had gone through, he crept back home, and for awhile escaped from himself in slumber.

CHAPTER IX.

VALENTINE'S DISAPPEARANCE.

DENNING awoke the next morning refreshed by a long sleep, but no sooner had the clouds of slumber rolled away than the sense of some coming disaster asserted itself, and became intensified when he found that it was long past post time and he had received no letter.

When he reached Brook Place he found the Professor to the full as troubled as himself, for he, too, was without news of Valentine; and at Denning's suggestion, telegrams were sent to both the Professor's sisters; and they sat themselves down to await the answers, filling up the time in idle speculations.

Truth to tell, they were at best but mutual Job's comforters, and when the first answer came, the Professor's trembling fingers could scarcely tear the envelope open.

"Valentine not been here. Have not been ill," was what they read; and when some half hour afterwards the second message came, couched in almost the same words, they stood and stared blankly at each other.

Denning was the first to recover, and walking to the door, he locked it, and bidding the Professor be seated, he took a few turns to give himself time to get his voice under proper control, for he knew that what he had to tell would tax his powers of expression to the uttermost.

The facts that he had to lay before the Professor have already been fully related, and it can easily be understood how terribly the narrative affected the old man. When he had finished, the Professor looked to the full ten years older, and Denning's feeling of intense pity for

him, as he sat staring, with his white, drawn face was so acute that for a time he lost all sense of his own misery. His lips were moving, but so little above a whisper was the voice in which he spoke that Denning went and sat beside him, and took his hand.

"Wilfred! do you know what they will say if we do not find her? They will say that she murdered him. Oh! Mary in heaven, if it be that you can hear me now, help me to find the darling God sent us!" And withdrawing his hand from Denning's, he knelt and prayed with such an agony of passion as made his heart bleed to hear him, until, overcome by the intensity of his emotions, the Professor's head fell forward and he fainted.

Denning lifted him as easily as though he had been a child, and carried him to his room, and when he had somewhat recovered, he left him, to begin the search that he vowed should never cease until he had found the girl who was so dear to them both.

He felt that he must have help now, and he determined to go straight to Scotland Yard, lay his case before the authorities, keeping back nothing, and so, with the help of the ablest brains that money could command, fight his terrible, unknown adversary.

He never for a moment entertained the idea that Valentine had left them of her own accord. He knew that the telegram she had received was false, and this knowledge alone was sufficient to lead him to the conclusion that she had been inveigled from her home.

By whom? and why?

He had gone but a few paces from the Professor's house when he noticed a man crossing the street towards him. He knew from his manner that the man was about to address him, and he was perfectly right.

"Mr. Denning, I believe?" said the man, touching his hat.

"Yes," Denning replied.

"This letter is for you, sir, and I was to deliver it into your hands and wait for an answer."

The envelope was addressed to Wilfred Denning, Esq. He tore it open, and inside found a sealed letter, on the cover of which was written: "Take this to your rooms; read it there, and give the messenger his answer."

"Who are you?" asked Denning, "and who sent you?"

"I shall answer no questions," the man replied. "I shall only take your instructions."

Not another word could he get out of him, and so Denning called a cab and they drove together to his house.

This was the letter that he read.

"If you wish to clear up the mystery of the Coats Road murder, you can do so by following the enclosed instructions. Come at once to King's Cross, underground station, and take a ticket for Edgware Road. On the platform a man wearing a red rose will accost you. You will answer 'Jephson.' He will reply 'Coats Road.' Come with him. You will also be told the whereabouts of the lady who is missing. The writer of this is your friend, and he solemnly adjures you to do as you are directed. Whatever your decision may be, you will be closely followed. If you attempt to communicate with anyone, your last chance of ever seeing the lady to whom you are engaged will be lost. Say 'Yes' or 'No' to the man who brings this. If 'yes,' come at once; if 'no,' the worst will happen. As a proof of the knowledge possessed by the writer, ask yourself these questions: 'Where was I on the morning of the 14th? and what became of the paper I took from Jephson's table?'"

Denning read the letter through twice. Then he went out to the man who was waiting for him, and in the full knowledge that whoever had written that letter knew every circumstance of Jephson's murder, in the full knowledge that he might be sealing his own fate, he said "Yes;" and with a face that might have been carved from stone, the man received his answer.

"You will go at once to King's Cross?" he asked.

"At once," said Denning, and when, a few minutes later, he passed out of his door, it was with the conviction that his every step and every action would be noted until he accosted the man on the platform. Although it was a long way to King's Cross, Denning preferred to walk, in order that he might have time to think matters over thoroughly. He had said "Yes," it was true, but he still had the power to go to Scotland Yard and, showing the letter, tell all he knew; but he was speedily satisfied that he was being followed, and he knew that once he called in

the aid of the police he would have crossed the Rubicon. He read and re-read the letter until he knew it by heart, and it struck him as peculiar that he was asked to do nothing but accompany some man who would meet him. There was neither promise nor condition definitely expressed, except in so far as communicating with the police went; and the only thing of which he could be certain was that he would learn the secret of Valentine's detention, and most probably the circumstances of Jephson's murder; and to learn so much, he was ready to risk a great deal. He was at a loss, indeed, to assign any reason why there should be a risk at all, for he had never, to his knowledge, made any enemies—at least, of such a nature that they should attempt to compass his destruction.

He made his way slowly to Oxford Street, and passing through the hurrying crowd, he fell to wondering whether any man in all the throng had such a secret to keep as he himself had.

Presently he found himself staring into the window of a gunsmith's shop, and although his experience of firearms, or indeed of lethal weapons of any description, was as raw as that of any average Englishman, he thought that it would be as well to have some means of defence; and entering the shop, he speedily became the possessor, for the first time in his life, of a revolver. While they were bringing him the cartridges, he noticed a man looking through the window, and although the fellow seemed lost in the contemplation of some guns, Denning caught one or two swift glances in his direction that plainly showed him that his movements were being closely watched. When he reached

King's Cross, Denning entered a restaurant, and, ordering some refreshment, sat down by himself in the farthest corner of the room, and, screened by the folds of the tablecloth, loaded his weapon and slipped it into a convenient pocket.

There were only two other persons in the room when he entered, but he had scarcely put the revolver out of sight when his "shadow" appeared, and quietly taking up a paper, soon became, to all intents and purposes, absorbed in the day's doings.

There is something intolerable in the idea of being watched, and to Denning



"YOU ARE FOLLOWING ME," HE SAID.

the experience was so novel and so irritating that he crossed the room and sat down beside the man.

"You are following me," he said. "Will you tell me why?"

"I think you can answer your own question," the man replied; "and it will be pleasanter for both of us if you allow me to carry out my orders in the least offensive way. You have said 'Yes,' and I am not to leave you until I see you in company with the man you have come to meet."

He spoke in such a quiet way, and withal expressed himself with that utter

absence of excitement that is so sure a sign of power, that Denning took no further notice of him, and when he left the place, the man followed him.

He took a ticket as directed, and the very first person he saw on the platform was a tall, military-looking man, in whose frock-coat a red rose was conspicuously displayed. This man, when he first noticed him, was talking to the messenger that had brought the letter, and presently they were joined by the fellow to whom Denning had spoken in the restaurant.

In a very short time the group broke up, and the man with the rose came to the spot where Denning was standing, and lifting his hat, asked, in the most courteous manner if the next train went to Edgware Road.

Denning looked into his smiling, handsome face; then, taking the cue from him, he raised his hat, and in a tone that barely reached the other's ears, uttered the word "Jephson."

The reply came immediately, "Coats Road."

There was a roar and a hurrying to and fro of the passengers as the train came into the station, and the next minute Denning and his guide were seated in a first-class smoking compartment in which there were no other passengers.

"It will save us both any unpleasantness," said the stranger, "if you will allow me to make a few remarks. I am not at liberty to discuss the why's and wherefore's of our meeting. I am only the guide to take you to those who will answer any questions you may ask; and I have the further power of assuring you, most emphatically, that you are running no risks, provided you carry out my instructions to the letter. It would be as well that we should not seem to be friends if anyone else gets into this compartment. We get out at Edgware Road, and you will please follow me to the carriage provided. If you speak to a soul on the way, I shall know it at once, and I leave you then and there. Under these circumstances, I warn you most solemnly, that your life will not be worth five minutes' purchase," and with that he took a cigarette-case from his pocket and handed it to Denning.

With all the coolness that he could assume, Denning chose one, and having thanked the man for the light that he

was good enough to hand him, they passed the rest of their short journey in silence.

When they left the train, Denning followed his man through the crowd and up the steps, and never once did the fellow look back until he reached a carriage that had drawn up by the pavement; when, opening the door of the vehicle, he motioned Denning to enter, and saying something in a foreign language to the coachman, got in and drew down the blinds.

"It is useless for you to try and make out where we are going," said he, noticing Denning's movement towards the window; "and if you will kindly do so, I should like you to sit beside me."

Denning did as he was desired, and he felt now that he was irrevocably committed for good or evil. He had gone too far to turn back. He could but leave the future in God's hands.

Denning knew, of course, that the length of time occupied by their drive would give him no clue as to the distance they might be from the station, and he gave himself up to speculating upon his chances of seeing Valentine.

What must have been the dear girl's feelings through those long, dreary days? Was she well? Had any harm befallen her? These and a hundred other harassing questions occurred to him, and brought him to such a mental pass that all thoughts of his own danger vanished, and in her interests, he was ready to do and dare all that mortal might.

His reverie was interrupted by his companion.

"I must trouble you," he said, "to put on these spectacles, and for a short time you must allow my eyes to act for both of us. If you will take my arm when the carriage stops, I will lead you at once to a room where you may remove the glasses," and so saying, he produced a case, and Denning found, when the spectacles were adjusted, that he could see nothing through their darkened glasses; neither was a side glance possible. He was perfectly calm and collected when the carriage stopped; and taking his guide's arm, he was led through several doors, until at last they halted, and when the glasses were removed, he found himself in a spacious room, furnished as bed and sitting-room in one.

"I must leave you now," said his

guide. "You will presently see those who, at the right time, will tell you everything you desire to know," and with a bow, he went out, and Denning heard the door locked and bolted on the outside.

He was left alone for a few minutes, when suddenly a door that was so cunningly fitted into the wall that he had not noticed it, opened, and two men appeared. In the taller of the two Denning at once recognised the man who had come to him calling himself the Comte de Baillard. Making no sign of recognition, he at once addressed Denning. "If you have any weapons," said he, "you must give them up. Resistance on your part would be worse than useless. I shall take your word as to whether you are armed or not; but, if you break faith with us in the slightest particular, you do so at your peril."

He spoke in the same even, measured tones that governed the conversation of each of the men that had addressed Denning.

The man in the train had made him the offer of a cigarette in exactly the same calm fashion as that in which he had told him that his life would not be worth five minutes' purchase if he broke the conditions imposed upon him. The man who was speaking to him now never raised his voice in the least when he spoke of the consequences that would follow on his playing them false; and coupling these facts with the knowledge they evidently possessed, he was so impressed with the sense of their power that he took out the revolver and laid it on the table.

"I have no other weapon," he said, as the shorter of the two men took the pistol up.

"There will be a meeting this evening," the Count went on, "and you will be brought to it. You will then learn where Miss Dallaston is and the terms upon which she will be released. Everything will be done for your comfort; but I must warn you not to waste your time in trying to make anyone who may wait upon you enter into conversation. If you want anything, press the knob of the electric bell." And so saying, the two vanished through the door by which they had entered, and left Denning to himself.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ANARCHISTS.

His solitude was undisturbed until late in the afternoon when a man appeared, bringing a tray on which were all the necessaries for a comfortable meal; but Denning, as may be easily imagined, was in no mood for eating, and he sent the viands away almost untouched.

The long hours of the hot summer day passed somehow. To while away the time, and to distract his thoughts, Denning made an examination of what he was forced to look upon as his prison.

It was a large and lofty room, comfortably enough furnished, with one strongly-barred window, through which he looked out upon a small yard surrounded on all sides by steep walls. There was a fire-place in the room; and when darkness came on he rang the bell and asked for a light, and the man that answered his summons at once lit the gas, that, coming from a powerful jet, gave plenty of light.

He found the door through which his first visitors had entered, but it had no signs of a lock, nor of any contrivance by which it might be opened.

It was useless for him to worry himself with surmises as to the nature of the men into whose hands he had fallen, or as to what their object might be, and all that he could do was to "possess his soul in patience." The evening wore on. It was some minutes past ten o'clock by his watch when the door opened quietly, and a man beckoned to him.

Action of any kind was a blessed relief, and passing out of the room and following the man closely, he presently found himself in a large, dimly-lighted hall, somewhat like a lecture theatre in its arrangements. At the far end, and seated at a table that stood upon a dais, were two men, one of whom wore a mask; and preceding him up the hall, his guide joined them, and pointing to a chair that was placed full in the light of the single lamp that lit up the place, he bade Denning be seated.

Each of the three had writing materials before him, and while the light shone brightly enough on the paper, their figures were shrouded in shadow, though even in that light Denning was able to recognise that the man who sat in the centre was Comte de Baillard.



HE FOUND HIMSELF IN A LARGE, DIMLY-LIGHTED HALL.

The strange and weird examination that he was to undergo was begun in a perfectly business-like fashion.

"Your name is Wilfred Joyce Denning?" said he who sat on the right, and who all through acted as spokesman.

Denning bowed in reply.

"I must trouble you to answer 'Yes,' or 'No.'"

He found his voice at that and answered "Yes."

"You received a sealed letter this morning, and you read that letter in your own room?"

"I did."

"You gave the bearer of the letter the answer 'Yes'?"

"I did."

"You fully understood the conditions upon which an opportunity would be given you of clearing up a certain mystery, and of discovering the whereabouts of a lady in whom you are deeply interested?"

"Yes."

"Fully?"

"Yes, fully."

"Yet," and here the speaker leant forward, and paused to give his words their full effect; "yet you broke those conditions by communicating with some person?"

Had Denning really infringed the conditions, the sudden manner in which the question was put would have made him betray himself; but knowing that he had done no such thing, he answered steadily enough.

"I never mentioned the object of my coming here to anyone."

"You entered a shop on your way to King's Cross. What passed between you and the man from whom you bought the revolver?"

"Nothing but what had reference to the purchase."

Denning had, of course, no means of knowing whether they believed him or not, but whatever their opinion might have been, the examination went on.

"You were at Jephson's house in Coats Road early in the morning of the 14th?"

"I was."

"What motive had you in going there?"

"None whatever. I had merely been taking a walk, and the place seemed so quiet that I went in and sat down in the shrubbery. You will pardon me," said Denning, "but I should very much like to know why I am being subjected to this examination. I came here to hear news of Miss Dallaston, and if you are detaining her against her will, I warn you that I shall set the law in motion against you."

"Let me remind you, sir, that you are not in a position to do so," said his examiner. "I think you will be acting best in Miss Dallaston's interests and your own if you answer my questions. Now, you saw Miss Dallaston rush out of that house?"

At the mention of Valentine's name Denning's coolness forsook him for some seconds. He could not reply at once, and the question was repeated.

"Yes, I saw Miss Dallaston rush out."

"You afterwards entered the house and found Jephson?"

"Yes."

"You went into an inner room and searched it?"

"Yes."

"What did you find in that room?"

"I picked up an ear-ring belonging to Miss Dallaston."

"Did you find anything else?"

Denning saw that concealment was useless, and he mentioned the cigarette and the piece of paper.

"What did you do with that piece of paper?"

"I lost it."

"How?"

Denning related how he had restored the ear-ring to Valentine, and how he had taken it from the piece of paper, which he must have dropped on the floor.

There was a whispered consultation amongst the three.

"You took a paper from Jephson's table?"

"I did."

The man who was conducting the examination opened a drawer of the table.

"Is that the paper you took away?"

"Yes." It was the same blood-stained document that he had put away in his desk.

"Now, we wish to ask you if you

have any idea how Jephson came by his end?"

"No, I have not," said Denning. "But I know this: Miss Dallaston had nothing to do with it."

"And yet you found her ear-ring in that inner room. You know the position in which her father stood, and the power Jephson had over him."

"Yes, I know all those facts; but I believe the ear-ring was put where I found it to cast suspicion upon Miss Dallaston."

For some time there was a silence, broken only by the occasional rustle of papers as the interrogator consulted his notes. Presently the questions began again.

"Later, on the morning of the 14th, you went to Dallaston's house?"

"Yes, I did."

"What passed between you and the Professor?"

"Only matters of a strictly private nature."

"Quite so. And connected, I suppose, with this letter?" And he held up an envelope addressed to Jephson in the Professor's handwriting. "This letter was sent to Jephson after he was dead, and it promises to meet the bill when it becomes due. You provided the funds, or are to do so?"

Denning was so surprised to find that, after all, the Professor had written that he was silent for some seconds. "I can't see," he said at last, "what this has to do with the object of my coming here."

"It has this to do with it, sir: It shows you that our knowledge and power are so far-reaching that we know nearly every incident of your life during the past few years. You need not trouble to tell us the details of what you consider a private matter. You went to your bankers, opened an account in Dallaston's name, and you paid in four thousand pounds to his credit. You see we are asking you these questions, not so much for information, as to show you that your every movement in the future will be known to us precisely and exactly as if you yourself were to give us the minutest details."

"Who in Heaven's name are you?" Denning burst out.

"That you shall know at the proper time. Meanwhile I must beg of you to repress all excitement, for we wish you to

come to the consideration of what we have to propose as calmly and collectedly as you can. Passing over the financial question, let me come to one of perhaps a more private nature. In the course of the 14th, you proposed to Miss Dallaston, and were accepted?"

Denning mastered his indignation and answered "Yes."

"You also heard from her subsequently that a friend of yours, one—Trenman—yes, Alan Trenman I see" (he had glanced at his notes), "also proposed to the lady?"

Denning looked as though he were about to break out again, and the examiner lifted his hand warningly.

"You naturally feel these questions keenly," he went on, "but I have put them as considerately as I could, and I have couched them in terms that for the most part require your simple 'yea' or 'nay.' I now come to the first of the practical points of our meeting. You would doubtless be greatly relieved to know that Miss Dallaston is safe?"

"My presence here proves that," said Denning shortly.

"Are you familiar with the lady's handwriting?"

"Perfectly," he answered, and in all truth, for Valentine often acted as her father's secretary.

"Then in a few minutes I will bring you a letter from her." And so saying, he withdrew, and the men who were left behind might have been in their graves, so deep was the silence that settled upon them.

Presently a church clock began to chime, and Denning noticed that the third and fourth quarters were so slowly dragged out that it seemed as if they never would end. It was but a small matter to attract his attention; but it helped him afterwards in a way that taught him to be very careful in the application of the terms trivial and common. The clock should certainly have struck eleven, but it got no further than the fifth stroke, and that it gave out in the feeble fashion of a clock completely run down. Presently, they heard the closing of a door, and the man who had acted as examiner returned and laid a paper before Denning. It was from Valentine; and she wrote:—

"MY DEAREST WILFRED,—I am permitted by those in whose power I am, to

tell you that I am well, and that I have not been ill-treated. They say that my restoration to you and to my father depends upon you, and that you will hear the conditions of my release from them to-night. God bless and keep you. I may not write more.—VALENTINE."

It was like a message from Heaven!

For a time Denning could not master the emotion that the sight of Valentine's handwriting called up, and he broke down utterly. They waited until he had got the better of his emotion; and filling a glass with water, he who had acted as spokesman pushed it towards him.

When he had recovered, the examination went on.

"You are sure now that we made no idle boast when we said that we could explain Miss Dallaston's disappearance; and you are naturally anxious to hear the conditions upon which we shall release her. To explain these conditions, I must ask you a few more questions. I have an account here," and as he spoke he unfolded a copy of a daily paper, "of an experiment lately conducted on the Kentish Coast, with a view to test a new explosive made by you. You are the Mr. Denning mentioned here?"

"I suppose so," said Wilfred. "That is, if you are referring to the experiment that took place on the 17th."

"Precisely. And it was made in the presence of Government officials?"

"Yes."

"Now, were you perfectly satisfied with the results?"

"Perfectly."

"You were not disappointed as to the time of the explosions? That is to say, they occurred exactly to the second?"

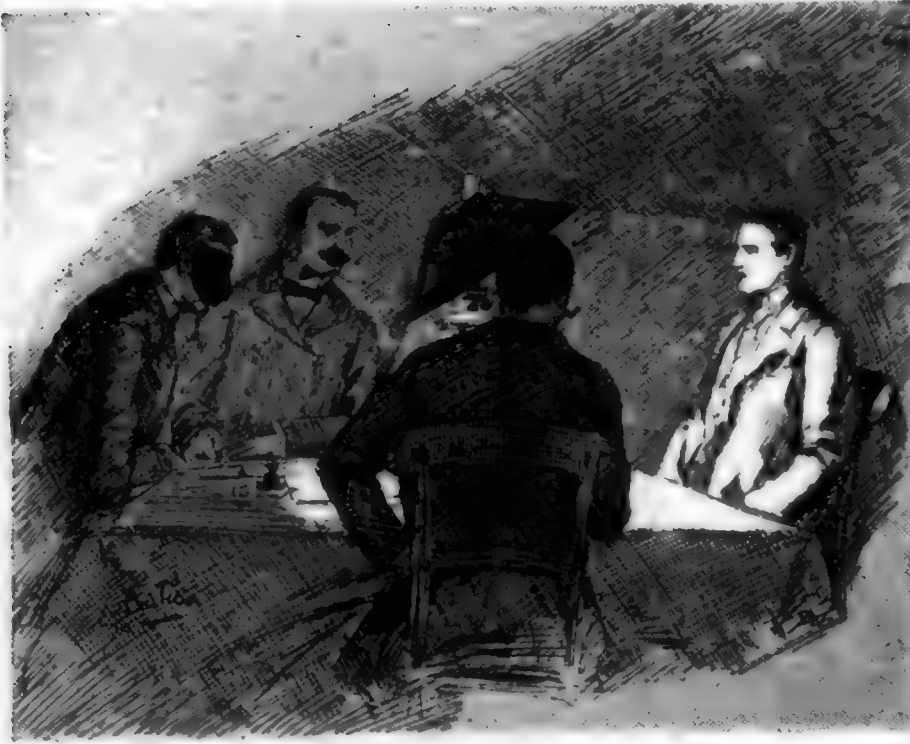
"Exactly to the second," Denning replied.

"Is the mechanism by which the moment of the explosion was determined an invention of your own, or is it ordinary clockwork adapted to the purpose?"

"The arrangement is of my own devising."

Already Denning understood why he had been brought to this place, and before the examiner spoke again, he knew the conditions he was about to propose.

"I have now," said the man, "to lay before you formally our proposals with regard to the release of Miss Dallaston. I must ask you to give these proposals



"IN THAT CASE YOU SHALL NEVER SEE MISS DALLASTON AGAIN."

your most earnest attention; and to that end, I have to tell you that you will be allowed three days in which to consider them. You will therefore be pleased to make no comment on them now, in any way or shape; and, before I mention them, I must have your promise to that effect."

Denning could do nothing but give the required promise, and, when he had done so, the man went on:

"For purposes, the nature of which I need not impart to you, we must know the secret of your explosive, and we must also know everything about the mechanical device you employed to bring about the explosion. If you put us in possession of these secrets, you and Miss Dallaston shall be set free within the hour. You shall have three days in which to consider these terms, and at the end of that time we expect you to furnish us with full particulars of your methods."

How vividly Bob Mellars's words and warnings came back to Denning.

"And if I refuse to do as you wish?" he asked.

"In that case you shall never see Miss Dallaston again. You shall never see her again," he repeated, "and when she next sees you she shall look upon you as she did on that man Jephson."

"So Jephson was murdered by you?" said Denning.

"You may call it murder if you choose," the other replied. "You have asked me who we are. I can tell you now. We are what you and those who think with you call Anarchists; but we look upon ourselves as the Apostles of Freedom. Even as the Apostles of old—and I say it with all reverence—were sent forth to cast out devils, so are we sent forth to cast out those who in the names of Law and Reli-

gion, persecute and grind down the poor under their heels."

He was standing now, and his voice rose and swelled until it filled the spacious room.

"Go to the East End of this your vaunted London, and you will see the misery that we are striving to relieve. Go to any of the great cities of the world, and there in their slums you will find the men whom we long to take by the hand and call brethren. Go and witness the abuse of power in the courts abroad, and you will find reason enough for our existence. Look how the poor are sweated to minister to the comforts and luxuries of the rich. Terrible indeed are the methods we employ; terrible are the risks we run in employing them, but the day is at hand, when out of this purging hell-fire shall come the Peace and Good-will that were sung on the morn of the Nativity. You possess the knowledge that will help us. Either you give us that knowledge or you perish from off the face of the earth."

He came down from the dais and pointed towards the door, and Denning followed him out, convinced that the great social questions that are thrilling and throbbing through the hearts of man-

kind had so effected him that they had made him as one possessed of a legion of devils.

When the door of his room closed upon him, and the bolts had been drawn, Denning realised to the full that Valentine Dallaston and he were in the hands of the Anarchists.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PROFESSOR'S COUNSEL.

WHEN Denning came to look round the room, he found that a tempting supper had been spread, and feeling faint and worn after the trying scene through which he had just passed, he made a hearty meal, for he felt that he needed now all the strength of mind and body that he could summon. On a side table he found materials for smoking, and truly grateful for these, he lit a pipe, and sitting down, wrote a full account of all that had happened while the events were fresh in his mind; and when he had finished, his watch told him that he had worked on into another day. Late as it was, however, he was not to retire to rest without a further surprise. Just as he was thinking of lying down, there was a tap on the door, and the man who had waited upon him entered, and removed the supper tray. When he had gone, Denning noticed a letter on the table; it was addressed to him, and it ran as follows:

"SIR,—You have now heard our conditions. To-morrow you will have the opportunity of seeing and consulting with Professor Dallaston, and we trust that after reflection, and in accordance with the advice which the Professor will give you, that you will at once comply with our requests. You will find writing materials in abundance, and you will, no doubt, have many directions to set down with regard to your discovery."

"May my hand rot off if I do!" was Denning's prayer, and with a silent appeal to Heaven for help to carry him through to the bitter end, and for strength to play the man to the last, he got to his pillow and soon fell into a dreamless slumber. He slept long and soundly, and could not but think that some drug had been cunningly mixed with his food, though he

could scarcely quarrel with such an arrangement, seeing that it had brought him the blessing of oblivion.

Naturally, he fell to thinking over their hard lot. In three days their fate would be decided.

He had no doubt whatever of the use to which his explosive would be put if he gave up the secret, and the idea of innocent men and women, aye, and even children, perishing by means of that which had cost him such infinite pains and trouble to perfect, was maddening. He would take counsel with the Professor, when they brought him—as bring him they would—and lay before him the proposals that had been made; but never for a moment did he doubt what the answer to those proposals would be.

He felt that he was indeed a modern *Regulus*, charged with conditions to which, while speech was permitted him, he would never agree.

Then he reflected how easily Valentine and he had fallen into these men's hands, and how very difficult it would be to escape from their clutches; but, impossible as escape seemed, he determined to bend all his energies to this one object. He had examined his prison thoroughly, and he was forced to admit that, without help, it would scarcely be possible for him to get away. The window looked, as has been said, upon a yard surrounded on all sides by high walls, so that even if he got through the bars, he would still be a prisoner. They might, however, take him out for a further examination, and he resolved that once outside the door again, he would make a dash for liberty, and although he knew nothing whatever of the plans of the building in which he was confined, yet chance might lead him by some passage or other into the streets.

Once there, the first policeman he met should hear his story; and strong as these devils were, he would fight them with the weapons of law and order. Though he knew perfectly well the terrible fight before him; for they would still have Valentine in their power; and the murder of Jephson, their share in which they took no pains to conceal, showed them alike unscrupulous and determined.

His morning meal was an ample one. Amongst other items of food, were some rolls that were put on the table in a paper bag, which he at once examined

to see whether there were any name upon it, or any address that might give him some idea of where he was. But the paper had no mark upon it whatever, and yet the sight of the bag set him thinking, and with faculties sharpened by the necessities of the case, he hatched out a plan for communicating with the outside world—a plan, that as he pondered over it, became more and more practicable. You will hear what the scheme was in due course, for he thought it better to postpone his attempt until he had seen the Professor, and could be sure of an uninterrupted interval.

There was still another chance to be tried, and that was nothing more nor less than bribery, and when the man came in to remove the breakfast things, Denning spoke to him. But the man might have been deaf and dumb, and without even bestowing a glance on the prisoner, and apparently never having heard a word of what he said, the fellow left him.

It was about eleven o'clock when the bolts of the door were withdrawn, and a person, whom Denning recognised by his voice as the man who had examined him the night before, came in.

In the bright light of the room, Denning had a full opportunity of noticing him, and he was surprised to find him quite a young man, though his pale, intellectual face, that told of blood and breeding in its every feature, was lined and seamed with the furrows of care and emotion, and bore upon it the traces of the "sorrow that sleepeth not."

"I hate the mystery in which we are shrouded," he began, "but it is the law of the Brotherhood, and as such I must obey it. I hope you have been as comfortable as you can be under the circumstances."

His voice was singularly flexible and of beautiful quality, and it could easily be imagined how, when he was so minded, he could stir and sway the hearts of his audience.

Denning told him that beyond his illegal detention, he had nothing to complain of, but he at once and in the most forcible language which he could command insisted that both Miss Dallaston and himself should be released.

"It cannot possibly be done," the Anarchist went on, "unless you give us the benefit of your knowledge. I shall

not weary you now with arguments as to the righteousness of our cause. I have only come to tell you that Professor Dallaston will be here shortly, and before you see him I want to impress upon you the exact nature of your position. The explosive you have discovered is precisely what we want to carry on our warfare, and those who know more of such matters than I say that the mechanism you employ is well nigh perfect, and the secret of that mechanism we must have. We were perfectly well aware that we must have some strong inducement to make you give up your secret, and so we have secured the persons of Miss Dallaston and her father. I cannot but sympathise with you, but personal feelings must not be allowed to stay the progress of liberty. I may as well tell you frankly that we hope for very great results from your interview with Dallaston, and we trust that the strength of a father's love will prevail over any scruples you may have, and that you will be induced to give up your secret, and so save the life of his only child, the woman you love."

"You have strangely misread his character"—Denning was beginning when the other interrupted him.

"I don't wish to have any discussion. Wait until you have seen him; and on the third day you will be brought before us again, and I have no doubt as to what your answer will be to our request."

He was about to leave the room when he turned and said, "Oh! just one caution. It is utterly useless for you to try to draw anyone who may bring you what you require into conversation, and any attempt on your part to leave the room when the door is being opened would lead to most unpleasant consequences;" and with this threat, he took himself off.

A quarter of an hour or so elapsed and Denning was grasping the Professor's hand; and though their hearts were too full for speech, they found a world of comfort in that hand-grip.

The man who came with the Professor at once withdrew, and when they had recovered from their emotion and had exchanged greetings, Denning proposed, as the easiest and best way of explaining matters, to read the account which he had already prepared.

The Professor heard him to the end in silence.

Then Denning showed him Valentine's letter; and when he saw her handwriting, he burst into a storm of grief that was awful to behold.

They had ganged to a nicety the depth of the father's love; they had pierced the father's heart to the very core; but when he had had some little time wherein to recover, the true nobility of the man asserted itself, as Denning had foreseen that it would.

"Wilfred," he said, "I should never have believed that in these days we could have been placed in the awful position in which we are. But we must remember our duty to society and to those whom God has set in authority over us. You know how I love my dear one, and yet, loving her as I do, I would rather never see her again than see her, and know that you had fitted so awful a weapon to these devils' hands. Think of the ease with which they could work the most terrible havoc. Whatever I may have to say to those who have so treacherously trapped us, I have this to say to you: Never give up your secret on any consideration, no, not even if Valentine herself bids you do it, and that, please God, she will never do."

At this point the man who had brought the Professor, interrupted them, and when the door had closed upon him, Denning felt that in all human probability, he had looked his last on the kindly old man.

CHAPTER XII.

DENNING'S MESSENGER.

AND now the time had come for Denning to put into execution his scheme by which he hoped to convey to those outside his prison the news of what was going on in their very midst.

It has been mentioned that there was a fire-place in the room, and this Denning had examined thoroughly, for the idea of escape by the chimney had occurred to him; but this idea he had to give up at once, since iron bars ran across the aperture some few feet up, with intervals



THEIR HEARTS WERE TOO FULL FOR SPEECH.

too narrow to admit of the passage of a man's body.

The chimney was an old-fashioned one and ran upwards in a perfectly straight line, and Denning could see the sky quite plainly, either because there were no flues or that these had been accidentally got rid of. His plan was an exceedingly simple one, namely, to fill the bag that had contained the rolls with gas, and let it go up the chimney.

On the outside he wrote a few words bidding the finder take it at once to the nearest police station, and within it, and written on the smallest piece of paper possible, he enclosed an account of all that had happened to the Dallastons and himself. He mentioned the names of Bob Mellars, Trenman and other friends, and he asked that they should be communicated with at once and informed that on the Tuesday evening following he would be taken to give his answer to the conditions offered by the Anarchists. To give his friends a clue to the locality of his prison, he bethought him of a circumstance which, at the time it happened, seemed so trivial as to be hardly worth remembering, and that was that he had heard a clock close by cease

striking at the fifth stroke when it should have struck eleven.

He thought at first of waiting until nightfall to send off his messenger, but on reflection he determined to try the experiment as soon as his midday meal had been cleared away, for it would then be more likely to be seen, and there would probably be many more people about.

He had made a most minute examination of the walls and ceiling, but could find no trace of a peep-hole; and running the risk of being overlooked, he filled the little balloon, and loading it with the piece of paper on which he had written the report he tried it to see that he had not overweighted it.

It floated upwards so buoyantly that to secure a sufficiently early fall he pricked a tiny hole in it, and as it slipped from his fingers he breathed a prayer that it might fall into the hands of those who would act as friends. He watched it struggle and flutter upwards from side to side of the chimney until it got to within a few inches of the top. There a narrow ledge that ran around the inside of the structure caught it, and held it for a few seconds, when suddenly, and as though the winds of Heaven were fighting in his favour, it was blown downwards for a short space, and, freed from the impediment, it rose again steadily and soared skyward.

Towards evening the examiner of the night before came in unexpectedly. He brought a letter from Valentine, and watched Denning closely as he read it.

"They say, Wilfred," she wrote, "that my fate is entirely in your hands; that if you agree to a proposal that has been made to you, we may go free at once. If it be a proposal that you can honourably accept, accept it at once, and get me out of this dreadful place. Wilfred, take me to the dear old father who must be nearly mad with anxiety.—VALENTINE."

"Have you any answer?" the Anarchist asked.

Denning took up a pen and wrote a few words.

"MY DEAREST VALENTINE,—I am giving the proposal to which you refer my earnest consideration. They tell me that you are as well as can be expected, and trusting that we may soon be re-united, Yours ever, WILFRED."

"It would be a comfort to me," said Denning as he handed the man the note he had written, "if you would let Miss Dalloway know that her father is here, and that he, too, knows why we are being detained. It couldn't interfere with your plans, and it would, at least, give them the satisfaction of knowing they were in the same house."

The man paused before replying.

"Since you think so," he said, "I shall see that she gets the news at once. The Professor already knows that his daughter is here;" and with a nod and a good-night he passed out.

Denning slept soundly for an hour or two, and then tossed about until he saw the dawn stealing back. Between waking and sleeping, at that point when the latter condition is not so powerful as to dim the brain's action, but rather, by its sedative influence, to remove the care that forms so great a bar to clear thought, there came to him an idea that so shaped and framed itself as to leave a clear-cut impression when his faculties were perfectly restored.

It occurred to him at first as the outcome of his reflections on Jephson's tragic end.

When he refused—as refuse he certainly should—to part with his secret, in order to help out the iniquitous ends of these men, he felt perfectly certain that he was doomed.

He had no means of knowing how or when he should be killed, and the state of uncertainty in which he would have to exist between the time of sentence and execution was far more terrible to think upon than death itself. If he could determine the latter event at the moment of his refusal, he would, at least, save himself the agony of suspense; and when he had come to this conclusion, it must have been some avenging spirit that drew near and whispered: "Why not compass their end as well as your own."

He started from the bed, and, bathing his temples and face, set himself, with all the brain power of which he was possessed, to study the problem as to how he might, like Samson, drag down the pillars of this house, and mingle with his the dying groans of these accursed Philistines.

In all conscience, he was but a shorn Samson now; yet, give him but a small quantity of that explosive, the knowledge of the composition of which had brought him to this pass, and his locks would be

restored, and his strength be such as to break through all bonds. To get possession of the materials he required seemed an utter impossibility, but Fate played into his hands, and, before the day was over, had made it almost a certainty that the opportunity would be given him. It happened in this wise.

At eleven o'clock in the day he had another visit from the man whom, for want of a better name, we must call the "Examiner."

Denning had just sent off the second of his messengers, and when, from the opening of the door, a gust of the fresher outside air was let in, he could plainly perceive the odour of the gas that had escaped during the filling of the bag, and he saw by his expression that his visitor had also noticed it. He hastened, therefore, to complain about the slight leakage of the gas, and he begged that, if possible, the window might be opened a little. The Anarchist left him at once, and presently the window was lowered several inches, and when the man returned, the air of the room was again comparatively pure. Denning had come to the conclusion that he would act as though he were, in a measure, yielding to the pressure put upon him, in the hope that their vigilance might relax, for he was still determined, come what might, to make a rush for the door if ever he got the chance. He knew, however, that every care was being exercised on their part, for whenever a visitor came to see him he always heard the bolts drawn by someone outside, and very often the visitor left by the door that had been made in the wall by the window.

He began, therefore, to appear to be coming over to their views by trying to get some modification of the hard and fast conditions offered to him, and urged that he could not endure the thought of Englishmen perishing by means devised by an Englishman.

The Anarchist jumped at the bait dangled before him.

"I can give you the most solemn assurance," said he, "that your discovery would never be made use of in England; and I can do so with full power to do what I promise, inasmuch as it will be to me, and me only, that you will tell your secret. You have been brought up," he went on, "in the same insular prejudices that surrounded my own education in early life; but if you had seen some of the

sights that I have; if you had had my bitter experience; if you knew the terrible power for mischief that autocracy gives, ay, and that nearly every present form of government gives; if you had seen how Justice is perverted and Mercy murdered; you would shake off your prejudices and, before God, I believe you would be one of us."

Denning caught up his last few words.

"You have named the Deity," he said; "and with all reverence, and, therefore, I take it you believe in Him; how do you get away from His command: 'Thou shalt do no murder'?"

"By doing no murder," he cried. "We *know* that we have a mission, which we look upon as divine, and in so regarding it, we are not guilty of blasphemy. We have no part with those who hurl bombs indiscriminately; indeed, they are enemies to our cause." And then he burst into a defence of his principles, couched in such enthusiastic phrases and uttered in tones so thrilling that Denning looked upon him with pity—pity that one who possessed a soul so ardent, and an appreciation of human misery so keen, should, in the excess of his zeal, have lost his balance of mind; and when he thought of him as an Anarchist, it seemed to him that sorrow and suffering had, in the person of this man, set and sharpened a weapon second to none in the far too crowded armoury of Satan.

* * *

Denning let him imagine that his arguments had produced somewhat of their desired effect, and at their next interview, in the afternoon, he tried him with another bait.

"If I were to consent to your proposals," said Denning; "mark you, I don't promise that I shall, but if I were to consent, there are certain processes that I could not possibly make you fully understand by a mere written description. There are certain details that must be carried out with the very nicest and most delicate manipulation, and if you were conversant with the subtle workings of our science, you could easily see the truth of what I am saying."

A curious expression passed over the Anarchist's face. He walked across the room and stood close beside Denning, and looked round as though he dreaded the very walls hearing what he had to say.

"Listen," he whispered. "If I tell you

my name, I shall, in the event of your ever leaving this place, be putting myself entirely in your power; give me your word of honour, then, that when you have heard it, it shall never pass your lips."

Denning solemnly promised never to disclose it.

The Anarchist came still closer, and in a voice so low that it scarce reached his ears, Denning heard him utter the name of one whose works had, many a time and oft, been the theme of admiration in the scientific world; and he knew that he was in the presence of a man whose researches in the same field of science as himself dwarfed his work until it became of almost utter insignificance.

He was not slow to notice the effect that the mention of his name had produced upon Denning, and while that effect was still potent, he implored him, with all the eloquence of which he was so consummate a master, to give up his secret; and he plied him with delicate flattery, and eulogy so fluently and happily expressed, that, coming from such a man, were well nigh irresistible.

Denning appeared to waver, and again referred to the difficulties in his way unless he could give the person to whom he was to confide his secret a practical demonstration. For two or three minutes, the Anarchist paced the room. Suddenly he stopped and faced Denning.

"I have trusted you," he said, "with the secret of my name. I must trust you further. In this place we have a laboratory, over which I preside. If you make up your mind to give me your secret, you shall come with me there and show me

any experiments you may deem necessary. You will find materials of every kind ready to your hand, and if there should be anything further you require, I can get it for you. Shall I come for you to-morrow, and, if so, at what hour?"

"Leave me time to think," Denning pleaded, and, truth to tell, he felt that he must be alone to master the agitation into which the Anarchist's proposal had thrown him. "Give me time," he said, "to sift the matter thoroughly. I have told you that I have given my word not to betray the secret, and I cannot lightly break it."

"I shall come for you early," replied the other. "And remember," he said, as

he walked from the room, "all that depends upon your compliance with our demands."

In those few words he disenchanted Denning. In those few words he recalled to his mind Valentine and her father, and Denning felt that any and every subterfuge would be justifiable to carry out his design of possessing himself of so strong a weapon, as a sufficiency



"I HAVE TRUSTED YOU WITH MY NAME."

of the explosive would prove.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ANARCHIST'S STORY.

AND now the fateful day had arrived—the dies infanda—and no sooner had the breakfast-tray disappeared than he, whose name was never to be revealed, and who was to act as guide to the laboratory, entered the room.

Denning felt that everything depended on his coolness, and he fully recognised

the difficult task he had before him, for the man whom he was about to instruct, and before whom he was to prepare some of the explosive, was one of the foremost chemists of the day, and to deceive him would be a matter of impossibility. He knew that his every movement would be followed, and he had made up his mind that if the necessary materials were at hand, and of this he had been assured, he would prepare the substance No. 2 in a condition fit for immediate use, leaving No. 1 imperfect, but yet so nearly ready for action as to be wanting in but one ingredient. This one ingredient he must contrive to obtain without the Anarchist's knowledge and secrete in whatever way his mother-wit might devise.

Denning was perfectly ready to accompany his guide as soon as he pleased, but instead of proposing to take him at once, the Anarchist sat down, and it seemed for a time as if he had repented of his design.

"I told you my name yesterday," he said presently. "If you care to hear my history, and how it came about that I am pledged to right the wrongs of this world, in so far as I am able, I shall have plenty of time to tell it to you, for the day is yet young."

Had he proposed to discuss the "Cuneiform Inscriptions," or a problem in Differential Calculus, Denning had cheerfully consented, so important did he deem it to keep him in an equable frame of mind.

He sat down, therefore, opposite to the Anarchist, and told him that nothing would please him better, and that there would be plenty of time for him to do what he had to do, even if they did not begin until the afternoon.

This was the story that the Anarchist told, but it must necessarily lose in the telling half the depth of meaning that was conveyed by the man's voice and gestures.

"My name you know," he began; "and with regard to it I may just say that it is one of the best known in Devonshire, and so far as I can feel pride now, I am proud of it. I was but sixteen when my mother died. - Stephen, my only brother, was a lad of twelve, and my mother's last words, as I knelt beside her, with my arms round her, were to ask me, for the sake of the love she bore us, to promise that I would always protect him, for he was but a delicate lad. I gave her my solemn promise, and as well as my grief would allow me, I soothed her last moments by

reminding her how much attached we were to each other already. My father, I must tell you, had died two years previously, and so it came about that at that early age I was left the head of an old and wealthy family.

"I should only weary you if I told you how I carried out my trust whilst we were yet boys, for that part of my tale has no bearing upon what I wish to bring home to you; so suffice it to say of those earlier years that we grew more and more devoted to each other, though in disposition he and I were exactly opposite.

"I had very early acquired a taste for science, and even at the age of twenty-one I was accounted as of some authority in the chemical world, and as time went on I became more and more absorbed in my pursuits.

"Stephen, as I have said, had been delicate as a child, but when he was twenty-one, and I twenty-five, he had grown into a sturdy young fellow, fairly well educated, and an adept in all out-door sports.

"As I have told you, our means were ample; and though I had inherited the bulk of my father's wealth, I always looked upon it as a trust consigned to me, and had made arrangements whereby, should either of us marry, the estate would be divided as fairly as possible between us. My close attention to study, and my utter want of any precautions with regard to matters of health, brought about a serious illness, and I was ordered away to the Mediterranean; and as neither of us had seen anything of the Continent, beyond a flying visit or two to Paris, it was arranged that we should make for the South of France, and spend six months or so knocking about in that country or wherever fancy might take us.

"I had given my constitution a severer shaking than even the doctor imagined, and when we reached Rome, in the course of our travels, I was very ill indeed.

"I must tell you that our estates in Devonshire were being looked after, during our absence, by a cousin, who was poor enough to find the allowance we made him for so doing a very welcome addition to his income.

"We heard from him regularly, and it was while I was lying ill at Rome that a certain Baron Meuville called upon us with letters of introduction from our cousin.

"The Baron was on his way to a little

place that he had in Corsica, where he intended to stay for a few weeks' shooting, and the description he gave us of the sport to be had there made my brother's face glow and his eyes sparkle; but in spite of all the Baron's persuasions—and he had a tongue that Satan might have envied—the dear boy would not leave me, but stayed and tended me like the good brother he ever was.

"I got better very slowly, and as soon as I was well enough to travel, we were ordered North, to a more bracing climate, for the malarial season was coming on.

"It was then for the first time that we entered that cursed country, whose very name I cannot bring myself to mention—a name that, if ever I had the power, I should blot out of the map of Europe. Its corrupt institutions and its callous disregard of injustice have resulted in the loss of the life of him who was dearest to me, and the wreck of my own."

At this point the intensity of his feelings got the better of him for some minutes, during which he walked up and down the room.

"Forgive me," he went on at length, "for this display of feeling; you will understand it when you have heard all. I said that we were ordered North, and I may have misled you as to the country I mean. I am *not* alluding to Russia, for not even in that home of autocracy could such injustice have been dealt out to us as that we received. In the city in which we had established our headquarters, I was rejoiced to make the acquaintance of several of those men whose names had ever been to me as household words, and you may easily understand how my pleasure was enhanced, when I was warmly welcomed by them as one who had done something for the advancement of our beloved science.

"Two happy months went by, and then into my Paradise there crept the serpent, in the shape of this Baron Meuville, whom I have already mentioned. Every day he and Steve became more and more intimate, but I never could bring myself to like the man, and I suppose my brother was fascinated by the fellow's pleasant manner, and by the fact that one who was so much older than he, and who had seen so much more of the world, should take such a fancy to him.

"The greater part of my time was spent in scientific research, which had very

little interest for Steve, and so we saw less and less of each other.

"I must blame myself to a certain extent for what happened, and Heaven knows that any blame that can be laid to me has been amply atoned for. I ought to have been less drawn from him, and I might then, perhaps, have understood whither he was drifting.

"I had a rude awakening.

"One night—one awful night—I got back to our rooms after twelve o'clock. Steve had not come in, and I sat down to wait for him. Suddenly there was a ring at the door-bell, and, knowing that the people of the house had retired, I went down.

"A man dressed as a commissionaire asked for me by name.

"I told him that I was the person he was enquiring for.

"'I was to give monsieur this note,' he replied.

"It was from Steve, and it was written from one of the most notorious gambling hells of the city, one whose evil reputation had reached even my ears. 'Come at once,' the letter said, 'and bring what money you have, and your cheque-book.'

"I hurried out, and, finding a conveyance, I drove to the Casino de B—. I was taken upstairs to a small room, and there I found Steve, Baron Meuville and two or three other men.

"'What does this all mean, Steve?' I asked.

"Steve was about to answer when Meuville laid his hand on his arm and spoke for him.

"'I found your brother here, monsieur, and, unfortunately, he has lost heavily to these gentlemen. I offered to pay his losses at once, as he is almost a stranger, but the sum is so great that I was not able to do so; and, as his opponents insist upon immediate settlement or exposure, I thought it best that Monsieur Stephen should send for you.'

"'How much is the amount?' I asked, in as steady a voice as I could command.

"Before anyone could reply, Steve burst out, 'Don't pay a stiver, Arthur—I've been cheated. Meuville wasn't here, and he doesn't know anything about it.'

"I saw the sinister look on the face of the elder of the two men with whom my brother had been playing.

"'I must remind monsieur,' he said, 'that we understand English perfectly,



"I RUSHED AT THE COWARD TO STRIKE HIM DOWN."

and when our money accounts are settled I must ask him for other satisfaction.'

"I was on the point of answering him, my pocket-book was in my hand, when suddenly the room was filled with police.

" 'This is the man,' said the officer in command, pointing to Steve. 'I arrest you, Monsieur Stephen — as a spy. Search him.'

"He spoke in French, and so rapidly that, before I had quite caught his meaning, two of his men were turning out Steve's pockets. My brother, I must tell you, was an accomplished artist, and I was not at all surprised to see them take several little drawings from him; but at last they found a paper on which was sketched, with minutest details, the plan of one of the largest fortresses in the place. It was perfect in every particular, as even I could see.

" 'I never drew that,' Steve cried.

" 'I'm sure he did not,' said Meuville; and then, in a moment, a most strange thing happened.

"The officer had come close to the Baron.

"Suddenly reaching out his hand, he caught hold of Meuville's ample beard, and, with one sharp pluck, pulled it off.

" 'Ah, I thought so,' he said. 'Arrest this man also.'

"Before I could recover from my surprise I saw my dear brother and the man whom he called his friend handcuffed like common felons.

"I heard Steve call out, 'You cur!' as they began to drag him away, and then there happened that which will never be effaced from my memory.

"Without a word of warning, without the slightest provocation that I could see, for the words had not been addressed to him, the officer struck Steve full on the mouth with the hilt of his sword, and I saw the blood spurt out, and the lips that had drawn their first draughts from the same breast as mine were left torn and ragged. I rushed at the coward to strike him down, but my foot caught in the leg of a chair, and as I fell I felt a murderous blow on the back of my head, and for more than a fortnight I lay in the hospital as one dead.

"Amid all the misery that followed whilst I was fighting my way back to health, there is one bright memory that will go with me to the grave, and that is the memory of the woman who nursed me. God for ever bless her for the angel

of mercy she was to me! One night she heard all my sad story, and then and there promised that she would help me to get the news conveyed to the English Consul of what had happened to my brother and myself. I was to write two letters; one to be left on the chair by my bedside for the spies, who, she told me, were on every side—the other to be hidden under my pillow, and to be taken by her in person to the Consulate. When the morrow came she never appeared, and from that day to this I have never seen nor heard of her. If it were in my power to wipe off that country from the face of the earth, and if she were to rise and bid me spare it, I would spare it, even though I know that it robbed me of the brother whose love for me was greater than that of David for Jonathan.

"I made attempt after attempt to communicate with our Consul, but I know now that my letters were never forwarded, and one of these days I shall know why. Well, they pronounced me convalescent at last, and I thought that now surely I should be able to make my wrongs and my brother's known, and have them righted; but on the evening of the day before that on which I was to leave the hospital, I was conveyed to the frontier, and there turned adrift with a small sum of money and the intimation that if ever I showed my face in the country again, I should see the inside of one of its prisons. I wondered at the time why they had set me free. If I had been guilty of any crime, why was I not brought to trial? and if I had done nothing against their laws, why was I not afforded an opportunity of showing my innocence? I tell you, sir, that when we have succeeded, as succeed we must, in establishing our doctrines, we shall have a terrible reckoning to exact from this country, and the mercy and justice they meted out to me shall be meted out to them.

"When I had crossed the frontier, I turned round and cursed that country and its tyrants until, breath failing me, I sank to the ground. At some little distance was a village. When I recovered my strength, and had crawled to within a few yards of the one inn it contained, a man met me. So gaunt and horrible was he, so utterly the wreck of the elegant man whom I had known as Baron Meuville, that I should never have recognised him; and, as it was, when he had told me his name, when he had proved his identity by

recalling to my mind the terrible scene of that night in the gambling-hell, I could scarcely believe him. He it was, however, and when we had refreshed ourselves he told me, in the privacy of the room we had taken, why it was that he had met me.

"*'I knew that you were coming here,'* he said. *'I have means of information that this Government knows nothing of, and, if all goes well, your brother will be with us to-morrow night.'*

"You can easily understand how his news affected me. By means of bribes and in other ways that he could not explain to me on account of an oath that bound him, he had procured his own release and had further arranged for Steve's, and had so planned it that he would be with us the next night. I thanked him with all the fervour of which my heart was capable, and I vowed that he should be repaid for all that he had done for us—and he *shall* be!"

He uttered these last words slowly, and such a look came over his face that Denning could easily have imagined that he was gazing at the face of a fiend. Presently he went on.

"We waited on the borders of the frontier until the moon began to rise.

"*'In a few minutes,'* said Meuville, *'you will grasp your brother's hand.'*

"I was quivering with excitement; I could scarcely stand still; when suddenly I heard the sound of horses at full gallop. Up the road and in the light of the moon, that had now cleared the horizon, came a horseman whose form I recognised. He had almost reached us, he was steadying his horse to leap from its back, when we heard the sharp crack of a rifle. I saw him reel in his saddle—I rushed forward, and his blood bedabbled my hands as I caught him. One last glance I had of his white face, one feeble pressure of his hand, and then the little strength I had failed me, and I remember no more till I came to myself in the inn and found Meuville beside me. When I had sufficiently recovered, he took me to a churchyard on the hillside, and there, on a marble slab, I read the name of my beloved brother—Stephen!"

As the name escaped him, he sank into a chair and gave way to his emotion.

When he lifted his face, it wore a look that Denning was never to see upon it again. By degrees he became calmer, and presently went on with his story.

"Meuville shortly afterwards gave me Steve's ring, and that is the only souvenir I have of my brother. Some fortnight after I had first visited Steve's grave, two Englishmen came to the village, and Meuville brought them to see me. It struck me that they were very inquisitive about my affairs, and my wounds were so recent that they would not bear any but the gentlest handling; and so, at some remark one of them made, I burst into a passion and ordered them out of the place.

"A few mornings afterwards I woke up to find myself alone. A letter lay on the chair beside my bed, and it told me that Meuville had had to hurry from the country, and that he advised me to follow him without delay. 'Your countrymen,' he wrote, 'are still in the village. They leave to-day. Forget what happened when you saw them last and come with them. It is your best chance, and perhaps your only one, of getting to England again and placing yourself in a position to avenge your murdered brother.' I sailed from Genoa with the Englishmen, and within a fortnight I was an inmate of a lunatic asylum.

"The men with whom I came over were doctors. They were not to blame, for Meuville had woven round me such a web of falsehood, and withal so subtle, that they believed him. You may be sure that I made every effort to prove my sanity. The commissioners did not even take the trouble to conceal the smile with which my story was received, and so, for two years, there I remained, until, in very truth, I began to believe that I really was mad. One day there came to the asylum, on temporary duty, a young doctor who had seen me on several occasions in London at one of the hospitals, where I had delivered a course of lectures. He knew me at once, and, to make my story short—for time is pressing—he heard my account of what had happened; and so convinced was he that treachery was at the bottom of it all that he himself planned and carried out my escape. Like a thief in the night I crept back to the home of my fathers. Although it was late, the hall door was not locked, and I got in. There were lights in the room that Steve and I had used as our dining-room.

"I opened the door, and in an arm-chair by the fire sat my cousin.

"When he saw me, he started up and cried, 'The dead come to life!'

"'Who said I was dead?' I asked.

"'Meuville. He gave me absolute proof both of your death and that of Stephen,' he replied.

"'Did he?' I shouted. 'Then it was he, I suppose, who shut me up in a mad-house?'

"No sooner had I said the word 'mad-house' than a swift change passed over his face. He stretched out his hand towards the bell-rope, but he never reached it, for I caught his arm, and held it in a grip from which there was no escape. At that moment I had, indeed, almost crossed the border line of sanity, for I knew the story of his treachery nearly as well as if I had heard it from his own lips. He it was who had set Meuville on to get rid of us. For reasons that I have not yet found out, but at which I can shrewdly guess, Meuville had reported me dead, and had got me into the asylum. I made my cousin walk with me to the farthest corner of the estate. There I took from him what money he had, and when I left him I promised him that he should shortly answer for his treachery. I cannot explain to you the steps by which I became what I am, but suffice it to say that within a month my kinsman was a prisoner in this very room. We wrung from him a full confession, and for the time we spared his wretched life on condition that he should go back, and administer my estates to the best of his ability, and should send us every penny beyond the bare expenses. When money is no longer a necessity to us he shall answer for his crimes."

He paused for a few seconds.

"Do you wonder now," he went on, "that I am pledged, heart and soul, to the cause I have taken up? Do you wonder that I have linked myself with those who profess the Gospel of Freedom?"

Denning looked at him as he stood towering above him to the full of his manly height, his eyes aglow with the flame of a passion akin to madness; and he answered in all sincerity, and with the full knowledge that he was a prisoner in his hands: "God help you! I pity you!"

The stern look deepened on the Anarchist's face.

"Away with your pity! Give me your help!" he cried. "I shall come back for you presently, and I shall take you where you can show me that which will do more for us than the pity of all the angels of

Heaven!" And with that he flung himself from the room, and left Denning to his thoughts.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE LABORATORY.

IT was passing strange to Denning that in his dealings with him, this man had always at first excited his sympathy, only in the end to bring him back to the recollection of the evil he was planning for him. He could now fully understand the intensity of the Anarchist's grief and the wrongs he had endured; but still he could plainly see that in this man's case, sorrow and suffering had been but the whetstones of Satan. Before he came back to him, Denning was more than ever determined that, unless some other way presented itself out of his difficulty, he would carry out his scheme, and that his destruction and that of this unholy Brotherhood should be determined at one and the same moment. In half an hour the Anarchist came back, and his face bore a look more in consonance with the gentle feelings which Denning felt sure underlay the man's nature.

"Are you ready?" he asked. "We can go now."

Denning had in no wise given up his idea of making a bolt when he got outside the door; but any hopes he might have had of so doing were completely blighted, when he found that whilst the man, with whom he had now almost grown familiar, acted as his guide, two others brought up the rear. They took him through a labyrinth of passages, in which he might have wandered all day without finding an exit, and at last brought him to a room fitted up as a laboratory, that, to his experienced eye, was well nigh perfect in its equipments.

The materials from which he had built up the explosive which had cost him so dearly were in reality of so simple a nature that they were around him in abundance.

His companion watched him as he proceeded, making notes here, and asking questions there in a way that showed to the full the extent of his knowledge.

Denning first of all prepared, as he had arranged in his own mind, the fluid No. 2, and then set about the much more difficult and delicate task of building up No. 1. Let me not weary the reader with techni-

calities; suffice it to say, that after an hour's work, he had brought the substance to the point in its formation at which he meant to stop; and, looking round the laboratory, he saw the last ingredient required. He still glanced onwards however, until he had made the circuit of the shelves.

"You are looking for something?" the Anarchist said.

Denning could scarcely control his voice.

"Yes," he replied. "There is one other substance I want. If I write it on a piece of paper and place it in a sealed envelope, will you pledge me your word of honour not to look at it, but to send it to the address I shall put on it, and to give me the packet unopened when your messenger brings it back?"

The Anarchist looked at him searchingly.

"You are asking me to take a fearful risk," he replied. "How do I know that you may not be writing to a friend? How do I know that you may not be attempting to inform the authorities?"

The critical moment had come. Denning *must* make him leave the laboratory.

"You will either have to trust me," he said, "or—you shall never know the further steps. You have me in your power. If your messenger does not come back in such time as you think he ought, you can do to me what you please."

The Anarchist walked up and down the laboratory, and Denning watched him in an agony of suspense. At last he spoke:

"You can write for what you require," he said, "and I promise you that no one shall open the envelope nor the packet when it comes back."

Denning took a slip of paper and wrote upon it the name of a substance that, even if the other played him false, would not betray him, for it was a substance that might from its nature be employed in the manufacture of an explosive. He placed the paper in an envelope, and having sealed it up, wrote upon it the name of a well-known chemist. The Anarchist took the letter and glanced at the name. The moment that the door closed upon him, and as soon as he had heard the sound of the bolts being shot, Denning snatched up one of the phials that were lying about, and with trembling hand half-filled it with the fluid No. 2, the preparation of which had been completed.

Into a second phial he poured a sufficiency of the substance which he had last been preparing; and when to this he had added the proper quantity of the one ingredient to make it perfect, he had enough of the explosive to blow up a palace. He had but just secreted the phials in different pockets; the fluid in the bottle that had been hastily replaced on the shelf had scarcely come to rest, when the bolts were withdrawn and the Anarchist was with him again.

"We shall have some time to wait," he said. "Have you completed your preparations as far as you can?"

"I have gone as far as I intend," Denning replied. "You have extorted a reluctant help from me, a help that nothing but the danger of those nearest and dearest to me could have wrung from me. I must still safeguard them to the best of my ability, and I propose to do so in this way: you have one of the elements of the explosive perfect; the other can be made so by a very simple process, which process I propose to show you in the presence of your colleagues, after I have received distinct proof that Miss Dallaston and her father are safe."

"What do you consider distinct proof?"

"A letter from Miss Dallaston, witnessed by some respectable tradesman, in whose shop she and her father can wait for me."

"How do you mean it to be witnessed?" he asked, after a pause.

"I mean," said Denning, "that Miss Dallaston is to write a note in the tradesman's presence, and he is to put his signature on the envelope."

He paced up and down the laboratory again.

"The very fact," said he, facing Denning, "that I trust you so much must be proof to you of our far-reaching power. I have allowed you to send out what may be, for all I know, a summons for help; I am further going to release the Professor and his daughter. Do you think that I should act thus if I were not certain that, in the event of your playing us false, you and the Dallastons would be reached as surely as Jephson was? Aye, and as surely as that guilty cousin of mine, and his confederate, Meuville, shall be! The mystery of Jephson's removal will never be cleared up. So secretly are such punishments meted out that I could not, if I would, tell you the circumstances of his death; and if you were at liberty this

minute, what could you do but incriminate Miss Dallaston, if you told the truth? When the order goes out for the removal of one who is a bar to our further progress, it is done in such a way that no clue, no trace is left behind. Let me implore you, then, as you value your own safety, and still more that of the girl you love, to put away any idea that you may have of betraying us by palming off some innocent substance upon us. Before you are set free, I shall make certain experiments with what you give me, and if the results are not satisfactory, you will not be asked your secret a second time."

He was giving Denning another taste of his dual nature. When he had taken the letter from him, when he had left Denning entirely to himself in the laboratory, he felt as though he were doing something mean in deceiving him, Anarchist though he might be, and although he had had, no doubt, a hand in entrapping them.

But again, when he began to threaten; when he recalled the murder of Jephson, or, as he euphemistically called it, "the removal," with all its attendant horrors; when he uttered a veiled threat with regard to incriminating Valentine, Denning remembered the bottles in his pocket, and he longed for the moment to come when he should stand before him and tell him that, in spite of his boasted power, in spite of the fact that he was his prisoner, he yet held him, and those who wrought with him, in the hollow of his hand; and that, whenever he wished, they should be but as dust that is driven before the wind.

And so he answered him, "I have given you my promise, knowing perfectly well my helpless position, of which I scarcely need a reminder. May I ask you if you thoroughly understand, or rather, I should say, if you remember what I have done."

"Let me see," said the other, consulting his notes. "Ah, there are one or two points I should like to ask about," and with that, they each took a stool, and, sitting down side by side, entered into a discussion so interesting and so absorbing that for a time the one forgot that he was an Anarchist and the other that he was a prisoner. A loud rap on the door recalled these facts to their minds. The messenger had returned, and when Denning held the sealed packet that had been

brought in reply to his order, he knew that he was in the heart of London, for the chemist's shop to which he had sent was in Oxford Street.

"What do you propose doing now?" the Anarchist asked.

"It will be best, I think," said Denning, "if you take one part of the explosive and I the other."

"Yes," he said, smiling. "It will save accidents if we do so. It would be a rather ignominious ending to be hoist with one's own petard."

"Will you take this?" said Denning, handing him the flask containing fluid No. 2; "and, if you will allow me, I shall take this other and make it perfect in my own room."

The proposal was at once agreed to, and in a few minutes Denning was back again in his old quarters, and, when the necessity for keeping up appearances had passed away, he sat down and shivered as though an ague had possessed him.

When he had recovered, and was in a condition to think matters over calmly, it occurred to him that he might be searched before being taken into the large hall; and, in that event, if the two bottles were found upon him, he would at once be detected in his attempt to play them false. He opened the packet, that had been given to him with the seal intact, and found a small phial of about the same size as those he had taken from the laboratory; and, emptying the contents into his ewer, he refilled the phial with one of the fluids he had prepared, and—to avoid wearisome details—he so arranged matters that he got his two fluids, the one into the bottle that the Anarchist had seen him bring away, the other into the bottle that had come from the chemist's.

It remained to get rid of the empty phials, and for them he found a safe and convenient hiding-place a few feet up the chimney on a ledge covered with an accumulation of soot and dust.

And now that everything was ready, now that he had succeeded beyond his wildest hopes, he sat down to try and think out some plan by which the self-sacrifice that nature so revolted against might be avoided. With such a powerful weapon in his hands, could he not compel them to open the doors and set him free? Could he not, in fact, arrest the whole of the gang?

For a moment he glowed with excite-

ment at the thought of one man doing such a deed, but his excitement speedily subsided when he reflected that, once in the streets, his weapon would be valueless by the very reason of its terrible nature. How could he cause an explosion, suppose that he were forced to it in a crowded thoroughfare? He could not even be certain of killing those whose deaths would be brought about most surely within four walls.

Seeing the utter impossibility of a wholesale capture, he reverted at once to his first idea; and walking his room with rapid steps he gradually worked out a plan which promised to place him once more outside the walls. He would wait until called upon to reveal his method of making the explosive perfect, and for answer he would tell them that it was perfect, that he had made enough of it to blow them to the four winds of heaven; and that unless he was immediately set free he would mix the liquids. He would, of course, be certain that Valentine and the Professor were released, and if he once gained the street, he could speedily raise a sufficient guard to protect them and himself. He would, at all events, have a fight for his life, and though Jephson's fate was ever before his eyes, he reflected that he would be on his guard and surrounded by friends.

Yes, this was how he would play his cards; and with such a strong hand of trumps, it would go hard but that he should win the game.

And if the worst came to the worst; if there were no other way out of it all, he could but carry out his original idea, and, bitter though death might be, he would still have the consolation of knowing that Valentine and her father were safe, and that they would cherish and revere his memory as the memory of one who had done that which he conceived to be his duty!

* * *

In the afternoon he had another visit from the Anarchist, and the news he brought was important: for he told him that there was to be a full meeting of delegates, who had been summoned from all parts of the Continent, and that the matter of the secret of the explosive was considered so important that the heads of the movement had decided that it should be revealed in the presence of the whole assembly.



'THE TIME HAS COME.'

The Anarchist left him without even having glanced at the two bottles which he had placed on the mantelpiece. Into one of these there gradually came the exquisite opal colour, and as it gathered deeper and fuller beauty, there came back to Denning the recollection of the night when he had tried his experiment. How different would be the result to-night, if fate forced him to mingle the liquids. There would be no answering purple glow, but for an infinitesimal period of time there would flash upon the eyes of those who were watching him a bluish tint, and then—oblivion!

The better to think calmly on all that was about to happen, he lay down upon the bed, and, worn out with conflicting emotions and all he had gone through, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XV.

PEACE WITH HONOUR.

FROM the sleep into which he had fallen, Denning was aroused by a light touch, and in the gloom—for the summer night was already somewhat advanced—he made out the figure of the Anarchist by the bedside.

"The time has come," said he, "for you to perform your promise. I shall light the gas, and when you have read the note I bring you, you will see that I have kept mine. Take a few minutes to steady yourself. I will wait for you at the door," and when he had lit the gas, he walked out of the room without even glancing round.

On the outside of the envelope that had been given to him, Denning found the name of a well-known tradesman, and within it the few words the dear girl had written:

"We are in safety, and in an hour you will be with us—VALENTINE."

That was all

He kissed the little letter—the last message, it might be, that he would ever receive from her, and folding it up, slipped it into his bosom, and, with a prayer to Heaven to help him through his trial and to give him strength, if the worst should happen, to play the man, he took up the precious bottles and joined his guide. As before, two men brought up the rear, and lest their suspicions should be aroused if they saw the smaller phial, he slipped it up his right sleeve in such a way that

he could produce it instantly and empty its contents; and to do this effectually, in case a rush should be made at him, the practice that he had in the laboratory would stand him in good stead, and the few seconds that must elapse would be all sufficient for his purpose.

As they walked through the various passages, there came upon him the temptation to throw himself upon the mercy of the man who was guiding him. Valentine was safe; yes! but only so long as these fiends chose to permit her to be so; and, moreover, he was forced to admit to himself, that as well might the wretch on his way to the scaffold plead for mercy from the hangman as he from this mad-brained Anarchist.

Presently they stopped before a high, double door.

"Are you ready?" said the Anarchist.

"Quite," Denning replied; and he caught himself wondering at the coolness that had come to him. Had anyone told him a month ago that he could have contemplated the scene that lay before him in a mood so calm that it scarce quickened his pulse, he had laughed him to scorn.

In silence the Anarchist pushed the door open and walked across the dais.

In silence Denning followed him, and went to the seat to which he was motioned, placed a little forward of the man who sat on the left of the three.

As he seated himself, he heard the door close behind him, and the two men who had followed him crossed the dais and took their places in the body of the hall, which, in its arrangements, as has been said, was very like a lecture theatre.

It was a strange sight that Denning looked upon, and as he saw the twenty men or so who occupied the benches staring up at him, he felt that curious sensation that actors and others have experienced when, for the first time, they behold the "sea of faces." On his right sat the three men before whom he had already appeared; and, as on that night, the nearest of the three wore a mask, and was otherwise so dressed that it was impossible to make out the outlines of his figure even in the bright light in which he sat. There was something so business-like in the air of everyone concerned, something so utterly at variance with the tragedy in which it all might end, that Denning, in spite of the knowledge that

he alone possessed of the terrible situation in which they were all placed, could scarcely repress a grim smile.

Presently, and just when he was beginning to feel that if the dreadful silence lasted much longer he must burst into hysterical laughter, the man who sat in the centre of the three, and whom he knew as the Comte de Baillard, arose.

"We have discussed the questions submitted to us," he said, speaking in French, but so slowly that Denning easily followed him, "by those of you who had any proposals to make, and having done that, I shall now ask all of you to observe the silence that is imposed upon us by our Order, except in the case of the three chosen delegates, when any matter has to be brought forward by those three. I am addressing you in French, because our English friends present thoroughly understand the nature of the communication that is to be made by us. In all probability you who have come to us from the Continent may have heard that a most powerful explosive has lately been discovered by a young Englishman, and you have, perhaps, read some of the accounts of it that have found their way into foreign papers. Be that as it may, the discoverer of this, to us, most valuable weapon, is in our power, and, in fact, is before you now, and by the pressure brought to bear upon him, he has promised to disclose the secret of his explosive. He is the possessor of another secret also with regard to the means he employs to bring about an explosion, and I need scarcely tell you, for most of you are tried men, that this is of an importance to us not even second to that of the knowledge of the substance itself. When this man has placed his invention at our disposal, as he will do very shortly, we shall have in our hands a power by means of which we shall cause thrones to topple, and shall sweep tyranny and injustice off the face of the earth."

His words cut Denning like a whip, and for comfort, he glanced at the flask he was holding in his left hand, and the flash that came back to him as he gently shook it was an assurance that presently, if need be, there would leap from it that which would silence the man's tongue for ever.

"I shall not say much more to you," the Count went on, "but will leave what further explanation has to be made to one

who is far more capable than I of setting before you the value of our new weapon. I have simply addressed you as brothers, for you know that there are many of us who are pledged never to take upon us the names to which we were born, until our glorious purpose has been fulfilled, and all men have been made equal.

"I shall now ask him to whom belongs the chief credit of having persuaded this man to give us the benefit of his knowledge to add what particulars he may think necessary."

The man who had so frequently visited Denning, and who had brought him to the room, arose.

"I cannot speak the French language," he began, "with sufficient fluency to address you in that tongue; but I have something to tell you that must be told, and I feel that I shall say it in the best way if I address you in the language of the country in which I was born. You must all admit that we owe a great debt of gratitude to England, for in scarcely any other country could we meet as we have met, and be in a position to discuss questions of such vital importance as those that have already come before us, and yet discuss them in comparative safety. He who has just addressed you has spoken of the enormous value to us of the secret which is to be disclosed to-night. It remains for me to add a few words in explanation of the means whereby we have won over this discoverer to our cause. Like myself, he is a patient toiler in the fields of science, and to him belongs the credit of having built up, from the simplest materials, that which will move Society to its very centre. We have availed ourselves of certain knowledge that we possessed to get him, and those who are dearest to him, into our hands, and with regard to this, I must say that he has naturally felt some indignation; and should that indignation find expression in words, I must ask you to bear with him, for when we know what he knows, he will have made ample atonement for any harsh things he may say of us. I need scarcely tell you that, having been present at this meeting, he becomes at once and for ever a member of the Brotherhood, and that before he goes hence he must take the oath. He may, if he prefer, become what I may call a lay member, in which case no services whatever will be required of him, save and except to give shelter to

any Brother requiring it; and no conditions will be imposed upon him except that of strict silence as to these and any other proceedings he may witness."

All this was a surprise to Denning, for no mention had ever been made of his becoming a member, though, to be sure, if such a proposal had been made, he would have agreed to it; and he reflected now that if the accursed oath should ever pass his lips, it would be to him but a meaningless jargon of words, and his membership of the shortest.

"On our part," the speaker went on, "I have promised that as soon as the secret has been imparted to me, he shall go free, and shall join those who have already been released. As you have been told, it is the law of the Order that no man discusses, in a meeting like this, matters introduced by the Three, and already settled by them. In token, therefore, that it is the will of you all that everything be carried out as I have promised, I must ask you to stand up, and our Brother will put this to you in French so that all may understand."

The man who had first spoken explained what was required, and at a certain signal the whole assembly rose.

"I am perfectly satisfied," the second speaker resumed. "I have here"—and at this point he produced a small phial—"a quantity of what its maker calls fluid No. 2. To produce an explosion, this fluid is brought into contact with another, known as No. 1. Up to a certain point, I have seen this latter substance prepared, and in a very few minutes I hope to know the one ingredient that will give to it its awful power. When I know this I shall retire to the laboratory, and as soon as I have satisfied myself, by the very simplest and safest of experiments, that he has not played us false, and when he has taken the oath, he shall go free, and neither he nor they in whom he is interested shall ever be molested by us. I may add that when this meeting breaks up, we shall never use this centre again, as we have chosen one in the East End, in the midst of those for whom we are working."

He paused, and for some minutes a silence fell upon the assembly, during which every eye was fixed upon Denning as he sat waiting like some actor for his cue, and expecting every moment to be called upon to explain that part of his process of which the Anarchist was still ignorant.

At last the cue came.

"I have now to ask you," the speaker went on, addressing Denning, "to tell these men that you are willing to impart to me the knowledge you possess on condition that you are set free, as your friends have been, and that, except in so far as has been stated, you are no further troubled by us."

It was when Denning tried to speak that he first realised to the full the strain that was being put upon him; and whilst he was making the two or three efforts it cost him before he could succeed in speaking, he had so nearly lost all control over himself as to allow the idea of pouring the two fluids together, and so determining their destruction, to almost get the better of him.

By a great effort of the will, he restrained himself; and when he did succeed in finding his voice, it was well for him that the last speaker had warned his hearers that he might give vent to his indignation.

"You have struck at me," he said, "through all that I hold dearest; you have threatened to take my life and the lives of those I love if I do not tell you what you want to know; and yet I believe if men knew that I contemplated giving you the benefit of my knowledge, even under such fearful compulsion, they would tear me to pieces in their righteous indignation. I look upon you with loathing and contempt; I hate and despise you for the pass to which you have brought me; and if anyone of you move but a finger until I have finished what I have to say, I shall hold my peace, and you may do your worst. You have acted most treacherously to me and mine. How am I to know that your treachery will go no further when I have told you what you wish? There is one among you who, I verily believe, is actuated by the highest motives, but the majority of you are no better than the scum of the earth. You call yourselves the Apostles of Freedom, and you hold me in bondage. You pose as the champions of the oppressed, and you are the cruellest of oppressors."

His voice rang out now in full, clear tones; and as he stood there, his frame quivering with excitement, and his face aglow with the passion that held him, the memory of all that he had suffered at the hands of these men got the better of him, and he flung prudence to the winds.

"What are you doing on this God-given

earth, you who are trying to establish the reign of Anarchy—the law of no-law? You brave men"—and there was a world of scorn in the word as he hurled it at them—"you brave men would bring about ruin and disaster at no risk to yourselves, and in the tumult that followed, you would steal the wealth you covet; and if the misguided fools that believe in you were to say aught against you, you would turn upon them the very weapon that I am to provide for you. But even when you have that weapon, you will not succeed in your infernal designs; no, not if Satan himself were at your head in very person as he is in spirit."

In his excitement, the bottle in his sleeve had worked down, and the stopper touching his fingers reminded him of the part he had to play.

Pausing for a moment or two, he held up the flask that contained the opal liquid, and every eye rested upon it as it flashed and sparkled.

"You have asked me," he went on, "by the mouth of him whom, Anarchist though he be, I sincerely pity, whether I am ready to tell you how I shall make this substance perfect, so that it shall become so powerful and so awful in its shattering force, that what I hold here would be enough to utterly annihilate this place and all in it at the moment of contact with its sister fluid."

Whether his words conveyed any idea of what he had done, or whether they had really meant to murder him when the secret was out, he could not tell, but as he spoke, he saw the right hand of the man nearest to him being slowly drawn back along the table on which it had been resting.

"If that hand moves another inch," he said, pointing at it, "I shall dash the flask in pieces."

He saw the man's fingers tremble, but the hand was stayed, and he went on.

"As I have said, it may fall to the lot of some of you brave men to handle this substance to strike terror into the hearts of those who love law and order, by bringing about the deaths of men, women and children who have never harmed you. If such be the case, I wish you to notice the peculiar odour the substance possesses." And with that he took out the stopper and laid it on the table.

The next moment he had so arranged matters that he had but to lift his right hand to bring the fluids together.

He stepped several paces away from the table, carrying the opal flask with him, and looked upon them in undisguised triumph.

"You have asked me how I shall make this perfect. It is perfect!" he cried, slipping the smaller phial from his sleeve. "And here is the sister fluid, and if any one of you so much as moves, I shall mix them! Now! Now! I have you in the hollow of my hand, and *you* must listen to *my* terms. Unless I am at once taken out of this place into the street, I pour. I care naught for my life, and I do not fear to face my God when I am bringing such devils as you to judgment! You

Denning had but to lift his eyes, and as he did so, the curtains parted, and in the interval between them, and with all the beauty of her pale face enhanced by the dark background, stood Valentine Dallastor.

With never a tremor in her voice she called across to him.

"In God's name, Wilfred, pour on!"

"And I say, in God's name! hold your hand, Denning!" And standing up in the midst of the Anarchists was the burly form of Bob Mellars!

And then, like some transformation scene, one half of those present were



THE CURTAINS PARTED, AND IN THE BACKGROUND STOOD VALENTINE DALLASTOR

have ten seconds in which to decide, and let him who sits nearest to me speak!"

It was a sight that was burned into the brains of those who saw it. The man standing with the mouth of one flask over that of the other, in such a way that the slightest tremor of his hand would spill enough of the fluid to seal the doom of the Anarchists who sat staring at him, with set faces, like so many statues.

Five of the seconds had ticked away, when the man to whom Denning referred spoke in a low, muffled voice.

"Before you pour," he said, "look at those curtains!"

looking down the tubes of the weapons that covered them, and the Anarchists knew that the days of their villainy were numbered.

One, however, made a sudden, swift movement. It was he whose hand Denning had noticed moving, and who had called his attention to the curtains. He had snatched a revolver from his breast.

Not on Denning did he point it, not on any of those who were his captors; but full at the girl as she stood outlined against the curtains, he aimed and fired!

So suddenly had it all happened,

that before Denning could reach him the report rang out, and almost simultaneously came the crack of another weapon.

The next instant he who had been the first to fire, lay dead across the table, shot through and through, and in front of him, on the floor, lay the body of the man, whom, alone of that awful Brotherhood, Denning would have spared. He had seen the other's foul intention, and throwing himself in front of the pistol, had received the bullet meant for Valentine, and by that act had nobly atoned for all the wrong he had done her.

Denning rushed to where she was standing.

He saw her figure swaying to and fro, and as he reached her, she fell fainting into his arms.

When she recovered Denning looked on the scene below.

Such of the Anarchists as had offered resistance, and they were few, had been easily overpowered, and, stripped of their weapons, they stood handcuffed in the centre of the room.

Across the table lay the bodies of the two men who had been shot.

Mellars went towards him who had fired at Valentine, and lifted his head so that the light fell full upon it.

He tore off the mask; and Denning beheld the face of the man who had been his friend and companion.

It was the face of Alan Trenman!

* * *

On the lawn of a charming house that fronted the sea, in one of the loveliest nooks of the Devon coast, a baby boy lay on a bear-skin rug, smothered in flowers, and kicking his heels in the soft, warm evening air; and beside him, in a cosy chair, sat the man who, two years before, had so nobly saved Valentine's life.

Happily his wound, though serious, had not proved fatal, but he was still somewhat of an invalid, and Denning and his wife had come to stay the summer with him, and were now waiting on the terrace of the house to catch the first glimpse of the carriage that was bringing to them their old friend, Bob Mellars, after his long ramble on the Continent.

It was through him that the Anarchist's

story had become known, and his influence procured a pardon; and he it was who cleared up the mysteries that had so suddenly cropped up in Denning's life. He had long ago explained his connection with that branch of the detective force, whose especial duty it was to watch the doings of suspected foreigners, and those who aided them; and he had told them fully the story of the murder of Jephson, who had died by the hand of Trenman. It had been known for a long time that Trenman was in the pay of the Anarchists, and that he was deeply in Jephson's debt; and on the evening of the tragedy the two men had dined together, and Mellars's head man was actually in the smoking-room when the blow was struck. Trenman was not arrested at once, because this would have prevented the meeting of the Delegates, of which Mellars had full information, even before Denning's messenger-bag came to hand, as come it did. The reference to the church clock gave them the clue as to the particular centre where the prisoners were confined, and their information as to pass-words, signs, etc., came from a noted Anarchist whom they had arrested, and over whom they held the terrors of the knout and Siberia. They had captured the Delegates as they severally arrived, and had been able to make up their men so well that they readily personated them at the meeting. It was by Trenman's contrivance and treachery that the Professor and Valentine had been brought back to hear Denning give up his secret, and so disgrace himself for ever in their eyes.

"He's very late," said Denning, looking at his watch for the twentieth time. But even as he spoke, they heard the sound of wheels.

Half way down the drive the carriage stopped for a minute or two; then it came on rapidly, and presently Bob was with them, and his deep bass voice was rolling out his thanks for their warm welcome, and the well-known tones brought the Professor from the house. Together they went over to the invalid, and Bob stooped to pick up the baby boy, and stood dandling him in his arms.

"And how are we now, Arthur, as the stage medicos say? Better, I hope?" asked Bob.

"Yes, I think so, Mellars, thank you. I'm pleased to welcome you to Devon, and I hope that you will make a long stay

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son's wardrobe

with us, though I'm afraid you will find me but a sorry host."

"Oh, you must cheer up," said Bob. "Time, you know, is a great healer."

"Not in my case, Mellars. Everything around me reminds me of my brother, and how badly I carried out my trust. I don't believe I shall ever know happiness again."

"Nonsense, Arthur," said Bob.

All this time Bob had been holding Denning's son and heir, and his friends had noticed that there was an air of suppressed excitement about him. Handing the child to his mother, he went and stood close beside the invalid.

"Suppose," he said, "that that wretch, Meuville, had been deceiving you all the time. What if your brother was not fatally wounded? He may not be dead; and——"

"Don't torture me, Mellars. Let me forget that night if I can," said Arthur. "He is dead, or I should have heard of him. Oh, Steve—Steve!" he cried, "if you can hear me now, forgive me and bring me peace."

Even as he spoke the bushes on the side of the lawn parted, and a man came forward with outstretched arms.

"Arthur! Don't you know me?"

"Merciful God! Steve—Steve!"
And so the peace came.

THE END.



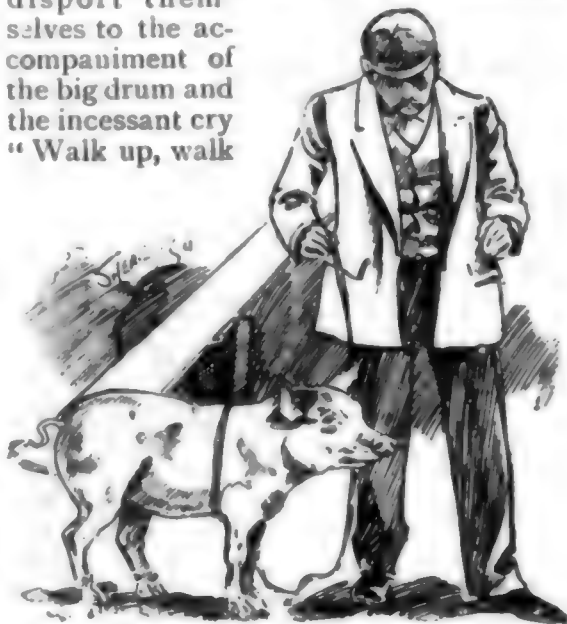
A CHAT WITH THE CIRCUS KING — LORD GEO SANGER BY ERNEST F. SHERIE

**NOTWITH-
STANDING** the fact that the travelling caravan, with its multiplicity of entertainments, usually set forth by garish posters more notable

for the brilliant colours than for any artistic merit, is practically a thing of the past, there are a few remaining to us; and among these, there is no name better known than Mr. Sanger, or, as he is more generally called, "Lord George," the prefix "Lord" being his Christian name and not a title. To say that the ordinary "fair" show had disappeared would scarcely be correct; but, at the same time, it is certainly not the institution it was in the days when our grandparents, and even our parents, used to travel miles to be present at the "fair" in the country town or village, and when the advent of this festival was hailed as a general holiday, and the general serenity of the neighbourhood was disturbed by the beating of many drums, the braying of cornets and the shrieking of hurdy-gurdies.

During the recent winter, Mr. Sanger brought a portion of his retinue and apparatus to the North of London, where he was so well appreciated that the stay, which was originally intended for two weeks, was prolonged to ten weeks. This, in these days of theatres, music halls and entertainments on all sides of us, in a thickly-populated district scarcely two miles from the heart of the city, would

seem to imply that the fascination of the circus ring has not lost all its power. Handicapped by an approach which it was predicted that no respectable person would traverse, it is surprising to record that the venture was rewarded with results which substantially added to the proprietor's exchequer, and that it was not the "riff-raff" of the neighbourhood, but a vast number of the better classes who were attracted. Muffling up my throat one evening, and telescoping my head as low as possible into my spacious coat-collar, I joined the throng which were gazing open-mouthed at the seductive pictures (by unknown artists) displayed on the façade of the grand entrance. In appearance it was much the same as the old-fashioned "show," where portly dames, acrobats, clowns and red Indians disport themselves to the accompaniment of the big drum and the incessant cry "Walk up, walk



THE TRAINED PIG

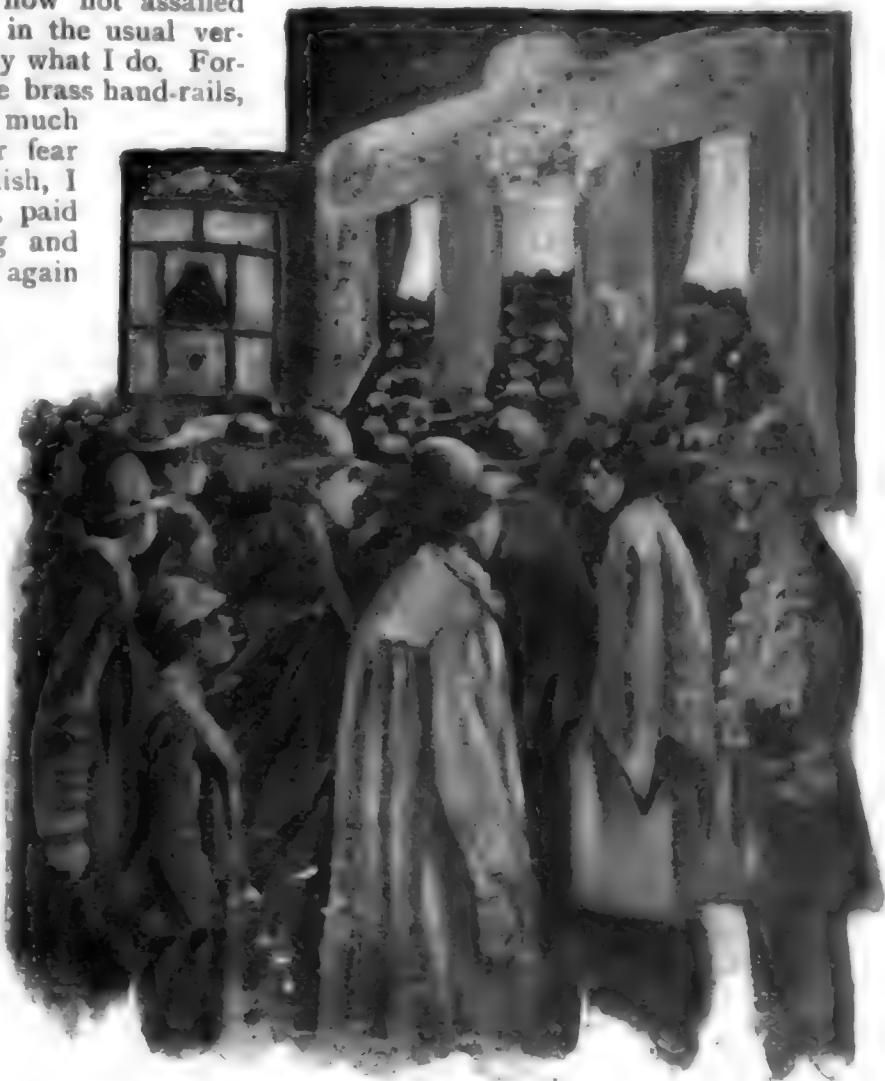
up!" and although now not assailed with this invitation in the usual vernacular, it is precisely what I do. Forbearing to touch the brass hand-rails, which evidenced so much "elbow grease," for fear of removing the polish, I ascended the steps, paid my humble shilling and — well, descended again a similar pair of steps, the other side, which placed me on precisely the same level I had started from. It being rather dark at this spot, I began to ponder whether I had been the victim of an unprincipled door-keeper; scorning to go back, however, I proceeded on a mission of inquiry, which was brought to an abrupt termination by what I, at first, fondly imagined was an indiarubber hose pipe; eventually I became conscious that there was something or someone at the end of it. I don't know what would have happened, had not Lord George arrived at this moment and hastened to put me to rights.

"That's a fine beast, isn't it? That's the elephant, which went on a voyage of discovery some time back, on his own — I dare say you remember."

I did, and now shuddered to think what would have been the result had the beast resented my inquisitiveness with anything approaching the zeal with which he had removed iron girders, coach-house doors, etc., on the referred-to occasion. After falling on his (Sanger's) neck and tendering my profuse thanks for his timely intervention, I proceeded.

"How many years have you been in this line of business?"

"Practically all my life. I was sixty-five on the 23rd of last December, and was a performer at the fair in Hyde Park



OUTSIDE THE CIRCUS AT NIGHT.

on the occasion of Her Majesty's Coronation, so you may gather from that that I started pretty early. It is not, perhaps, generally known by the present generation that such a fair as I speak of was held; it lasted three days, and all the shows and booths were opened free on coronation day; one of its objects was to attract the crowd and lessen the strain on the streets, which was exceedingly heavy."

"Your name has been before the public so long that people frequently imagine that you are a son of the original 'Sanger.'"

"Oh, no; *I am* the original. I have no sons: they are dead; but I have some nephews and nieces, and they are learning the business, and, in fact, will take to nothing else."

"How long does the circus date back?"

"It was started at King's Lynn, in Norfolk, exactly forty-eight years ago, so you

see I was a circus proprietor at the age of seventeen."

"Regarding the horses you use for the ring. Is it necessary to have any particular breed?"

"Not *necessary*; though, of course, we get animals of different degrees of tractability; but I have yet to encounter the animal which I cannot succeed in breaking. While we are on the subject of horses, there is one curious trait in their nature. I have had animals in their 'unbroken' state when it has been very dangerous for a man to approach, and yet a woman or a child could go up and pat them without the slightest sign of resentment being shown."

"No doubt it is very tedious work?" I suggested.

"Lor, bless you; I'd rather train a horse than a man, any day!" said my host with emphasis. You will find that horses with a short distance between the ears are the worst tempered, although much quicker to grasp an idea; whereas, those with a greater width are duller, but more tractable."

"Would you mind telling me what you think of Mahomet, the horse which was recently making such a sensation?"

"Old as the hills; I saw the business some years ago under the name of the 'Fortune-telling Pony.' I have got a horse myself which is doing the same business; further, I will undertake to 'break' any horse you give me, to perform the same feats in fourteen days."

"Where do you get your horses from, Mr. Sanger?"

"Some of them from the Continent—

Bohemia, Russia, France, Germany and Holland; some white animals, which came from the last named country, were very showy and valuable for the ring, and, curiously enough, were bred from two jet blacks."

We had strolled into the ring by this time, and I was struck by the taste displayed in fitting up so ponderous a marquee. On the outside of the inner ring were artistically laid out flower beds, illuminated with numerous fairy-lamps, which greatly enhanced the general effect.

"I shall have to leave you for a few minutes, now," said my host, "as I am to introduce Koh-i-noor, the fire-horse, into the ring in a few minutes."

I stood watching the various performers and awaiting the introduction of the wonderful horse. Presently a lovely white horse is led into the ring, and after going through a few preliminaries in the form of ascending and descending a platform which is raised some ten feet from the ground, he ultimately takes up his stand

on the top of this platform; fireworks are inserted into sockets on the elevation and the whole is then fused; during the explosion and show of fire, which is intensely vivid, the animal remains stolid, and it is not until he receives the sign from his master that he attempts to descend to the ground. "How on earth do you get them to stand that?" I ask, when I find Mr. Sanger by my side again.

"Well, of course, by degrees; a squib first and gradually increasing the fire; with care and perseverance



AT PRACTICE IN THE RING.



WAITING TO GO ON.

they eventually get quite used to it ; now, as regards horses being able to count, tell the time by watches, etc., it is all nonsense; it is all worked by a sign we give them, and I think you will agree with me that to train them to such a pitch that they can understand a sign which is not intelligible to the spectator, is sufficient to warrant the approbation of the public. Folks usually imagine that efficiency is not obtained except by cruelty. This is altogether wrong; the whip is very little used; there is no need for it. Each evolution that is gone through correctly is rewarded by a pat on the neck and a carrot, or some other delicacy. They get so used to some acknowledgment of their prowess that they quite look for it."

"But how do you get the animals to start pawing the ground for the purposes of counting?"

"Now you are asking me to give the business away; however, I don't mind telling you that I should start by just tapping the animal on the legs with a small riding-whip. This would naturally make him move his legs uneasily; I should then pat him and continue the process until he begins to understand that is what you want. Koh-i-noor was actually trained in three weeks; but, after all, I don't think there is a more tractable horse than an English thoroughbred. By-the-way, Barnum offered me £2,000 for Koh-i-noor."

"I suppose you number a good many horses?"

"Yes; we have two hundred and sixteen horses and ponies, which, with the wild beasts, elephants, camels, etc., cost a pretty penny to feed."

"The expense of running a circus, then, is pretty considerable?" I asked.

"When in working order, I assure you, that the expenditure is £120 to £130 per day; that is, of course, for ordinary every-day disbursements and does not include purchase of new stock, etc."

"I suppose you haven't time to go out to the tropics and trap your own beasts; how do you get hold of them?"

"In various ways; possibly we may hear of a ship expected with a beast on

board, and I go down and make an offer on its arrival; or, again, there are occasionally sales which I may attend. Have I a zebra, you ask? Yes, rather. Thirty years ago I bought four zebras and 'broke' them into harness, and was rather proud of my achievement in overcoming such difficult beasts; my sense of triumph was, however, rather damped while driving them in Leamington, by an assertion I heard by a lady who was driving past, and who ventured the remark that they were 'painted donkeys!' which piece of ignorance rather disgusted me; people would not believe that they were zebras, and so I got rid of them. Regarding the erection of the marquee, it is very dexterously accomplished, as you will imagine when I tell you that in the majority of the towns and villages I only make a stay of one night. I recollect once appearing in accordance with a command I received by telegram, at the Duke of Fife's seat, at Banff; it was most exciting. Upon our arrival we had a procession formed, which was taken round the house; I well remember that some of the ironwork to the gateway entrance, which had been up one hundred and eighteen years, was too low for some of the cars to pass underneath, and the Duke had it removed. To show you the way we travelled, the performance was over at twenty minutes past four and we were due to appear at Buckie, a distance of twenty-two miles, at eight. When

we arrived, there was a perfect crowd of fisher-folk waiting for us, to whom the advent of anything in the shape of amusement is a 'red-letter day.' They were so anxious to see the show that it was quite amusing and not a little perplexing to find them all anxious to help to get the marquee up; nevertheless, we commenced at nine o'clock and went through the performance. Our next stopping-place was Forres, distant about thirty-six miles, which we duly reached next evening. While at Forres, I had the pleasure of meeting Sir W. Gordon Cumming and Lady Cumming, who is one of the most charming women I ever came across. But how much longer do you want me to talk?" queried Lord George, with amused apprehension; "come round in the morning and see the practice; I shall be here from nine till one."

"Right," I replied; "I will."

The lights and the crowd have disappeared and the façade of the circus is exposed to the glare of daylight; a few youngsters hang round, and, if they get the chance, surreptitiously peep through any unfortified portion of the canvas, imbued with a curiosity essentially human, to see what is going on in the ring. This morning the "Guv'nor" is engaging a big staff for a new spectacular display representing the War in the Soudan, and the premises are inundated with coloured gentlemen, who are filling up their time by sewing together some matting. In the ring there is a great contrast to the brilliancy of the scene at night; a canvas length has here and there been thrown back to admit of a ray of light, but this is very subdued. Practice is in full swing; two nieces and a nephew of Mr. Sanger's are, in turn, exhibiting their prowess in

bare-back riding, while their uncle, all attention, proudly follows them round the ring, lightly grasping a rope which is attached to the rider's waist. This is in case of a fall; as there is always a tendency to fall outside the ring, whereas, in falling inside there is less danger, as the ground is soft; therefore, if a slip should occur, the holder of the rope pulls the rider to him and so averts the outward fall.

"Now, then, mount! Go on! So, so! steady. Yes; very good. Clever girl! Push, my dear, push! Upright! where's your whip? Excellent. Stop!" And the horse pulls up of his own accord for a rest of about two minutes' duration, and then on again.

"I don't know whether you hold any of those narrow-minded ideas as to the cruelty to pupils during circus training; but I assure you, my dear sir, such allegations are a 'myth;' it is absurd. I never experienced it in all my life, and if such things occur at all, it is only in *very* isolated cases. You'll scarcely credit it, but a training of five years is necessary before a pupil is capable of performing in public, and then, out of six apprentices, I will guarantee to say that you invariably find



A BABY PERFORMER.

only one with any real talent. Now, my nephews and nieces have got it in them; they are mad on it. As a matter of fact, there is a great scarcity of really clever circus performers. The work is too hard for most, and the years of constant practice very disheartening——. Stop that horse! he is false," says my host, in an explanatory manner.

"I don't quite follow you."

"Why, he started with the wrong leg, and when they do this it is terribly difficult to keep on the animal in a standing position."

Again the horse starts, and again falls into a faulty canter, only to be stopped until he resumes the correct action.

I could not help remarking the evident delight the youngsters take in their work. The eldest, who was appearing in public for the first time that evening, especially, counselling her less proficient cousins: in the interim, when two were disengaged at a time, they amused themselves by performing various queer antics, such as standing on their heads, throwing somersaults etc., which although not strictly part of their business, seemed to delight them hugely. There is no doubt that Mr. Sanger is much liked and respected by all his people, for all of whom he has always a kind nod or an encouraging word.

During a stoppage, of course the horses have to be stabled and watered, and it is no uncommon thing, in a village where there is a river or stream, to tether two



BETWEEN THE ACTS.

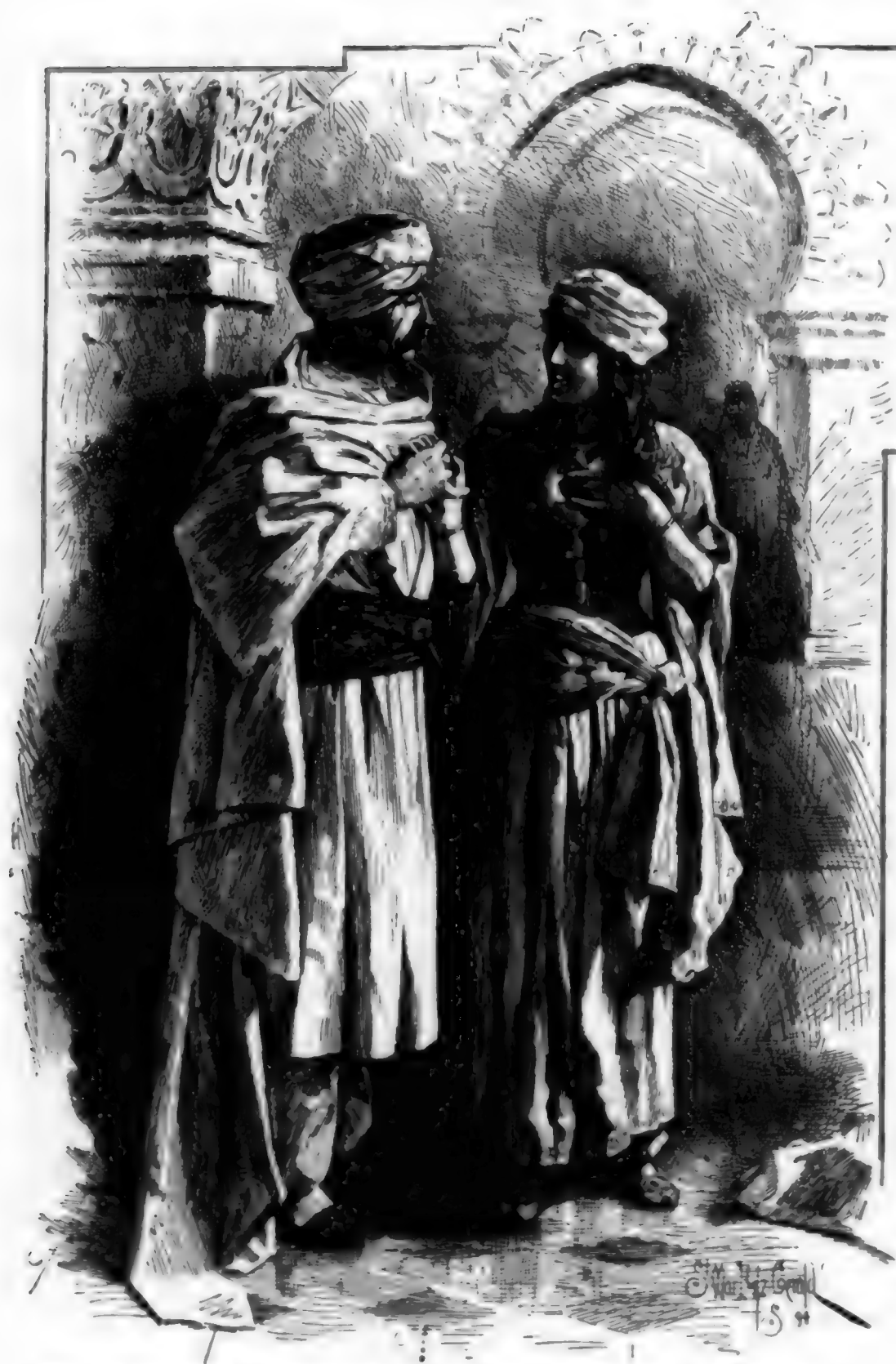
horses together and let them out into the water. This is a great assistance to the grooms, as the supply of water is frequently a great anxiety to the management in places where there is no main.

"Don't you feel you've had enough roaming about?"

"Good gracious, no! I love it. I *could* not live in one place for any time; my whole life is wrapped up in my business, and I don't much fancy I should live long without the excitement."

"Someone to see you, sir," says a messenger, holding out a card.

"Yes; all right, I'm coming. Good-bye." And for the fortieth time, during our chat, Lord George goes trotting away.



HIDDEN SKETCHES.—A MOORISH JOKE.—FIND SIX OTHER MOORS AND A TOURIST.

Young England at School.

GIRTON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.



VIEW OF GIRTON, FROM THE GROUNDS.

GIRTONIANS may question my right to classify their College and enter it under the heading of "Young England at School."

For over two years we have treated of the great educational seats where England's sons are prepared for the various niches in life.

That the fairer sex play an important part in the destiny and doings of our mother country no one will dispute; and to attribute the future of England to our sons alone, without reference to our daughters, would be the height of injustice.

In placing Girton College amongst our series, I was prompted by two motives—firstly, to acknowledge that our girls are an important part of Young England, and, secondly, to visit a Ladies' College and secure an agreeable change in our long series. Girton College ranking, as it does, the chief amongst similar institutions, it is only right that we should pay it a visit before others; and to this end, our artist and myself journeyed to Cambridge by one of the famous express trains of the Great Eastern Railway Company.

Girton can hardly be described as of Cambridge, as we soon found out when asking for directions from one of the railway company's officials, and we were much surprised when we were informed that the College was over two miles away.

The trees were fast dismating themselves of their autumn leaves, and the day was a glorious one, but we were quite convinced it would be of little use for us to make for the College that afternoon with any idea of work.

With the little time at our disposal, we took advantage of the remaining rays of light to inspect the noble pile of College buildings in the immediate vicinity of our hotel, which is situated near the grand thoroughfare known as King's Parade, a continuation of Trumpington Street. The first College to attract our notice was King's, the chapel of which is one of the greatest features of the University of Cambridge.

Many a time and oft have the students of Girton worshipped within its sacred walls, and I think I am correct in stating that this beautiful edifice ranks as one of the associations of Girtonian life. It can



VIEW OF CAMBRIDGE, FROM THE TOWER OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

not, therefore, be considered unfitting to include amongst our illustrations a picture of the interior of this beautiful chapel.

As we left King's College on our left, we were confronted with the majestic buildings of Trinity, which our artist gazed upon with longing eyes; but we had set our minds upon making a picture of the Bridge of Sighs, probably the most important feature of the river Cam. We therefore directed our steps down Trinity Street in search of St. John's College.

It is, perhaps, as well to mention here to the uninitiated that the Colleges of Cambridge, or a great portion of them, are situated on the banks of the river from which the town derives its name, and each College has its own bridge connecting either its grounds or buildings on the opposite bank.

The Bridge of Sighs serves this duty at St. John's College, thus joining the ancient College on the town side with the fine new buildings of St. John's Court on the other.

In the vicinity of the Colleges the river Cam is extremely pretty, crossed by a variety of unique bridges; and at the time of our visit the autumnal tints of the overhanging foliage added to the enchantment of the scene.

Before leaving St. John's College, we were conducted to the top of the chapel tower, from which a most extensive panoramic view of the town is obtained, which also forms one of our illustrations. This picture is interesting, seeing that it contains, in the foreground, a representation of "the Round Church," or that of St. Sepulchre, built in imitation of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Immediately behind the Round Church will be noticed the building of the famous Cambridge Union, one of the two most important debating clubs in England, the other being the sister society at Oxford, from both of which have emanated many of our greatest statesmen and diplomatists.

Dotted here and there will be recognized some of the Colleges and buildings of the town; but as this article is not upon Cambridge itself, I fear I am trying the patience of my readers; so must journey over to Girton as soon as possible, leaving the view as a reminiscence of the great University town.

The following morning we were again favoured with excellent weather, and as the distance necessitated our posting the journey, we were soon on our way in a



THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

vehicle hired from a neighbouring hostelry, and leaving the numerous towers of Cambridge behind us, we entered the Huntingdon Road, passing *en route* the residence of Professor Darwin, and soon the Girton tower came in view on the summit of the hill.

The College building requires little description from me, as I think our artist has faithfully done his work in this respect, although he greatly mourned the absence of life in his pictures, which has so

characterised the illustrations throughout our series; but as a strict rule forbade this, we had only one alternative.

Miss Welsh, the mistress of Girton, is a tall and stately lady, evidently proud of her College and the welfare and comfort of all its students.

We were personally conducted over the College by the mistress, who pointed out to us and explained the most interesting features of the place.

Girton College is designed to hold, in relation to girls' schools and home teaching, a position analogous to that occupied by the Universities towards the public schools for boys; and the students' fees are fixed on such a scale as to secure that, the building having been provided, the institution shall be self-supporting.

The objects of the governors are to conduct a college for the higher education of women; to take such steps as from time to time may be thought expedient and effectual to obtain for the students of the College admission to the examinations for degrees of the University of Cambridge, and, generally, to place the College in connection with that University.

The principles of the Church of England are taught; but it is not compulsory that the students attend these instructions.

The College first saw the light at Hitchin, where a house was hired and opened, October 16th, 1869, for the reception of six students.

In December, 1870, five of these



KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL.

students passed informally the University examination.

In 1873, one was examined in the papers set for the Mathematical Tripos and obtained such a number of marks as would have placed a candidate among the Senior Optimes; and two others were examined in the papers set for the Classical Tripos, and were declared to have reached the Honours Standard.

From that time candidates were, from year to year, informally presented for examination on the same terms, as to standing and preliminary examinations, as undergraduate members of the University till 1880, when the remarkable success of a student, who was declared equal to 8th Wrangler, led to a movement which resulted in the admission of women to the tripos examination.



GIRTON COLLEGE, FROM THE ENTRANCE GATE.

In 1873, the College was removed to Girton, a small parish on the Huntingdon Road, about two miles from Great St. Mary's, the University Church, whence distances from Cambridge are counted. It has been said that the distance between the College and the town is a great drawback; but the Girtonian will tell you that the situation in the midst of exhilarating and varied rural surroundings is far preferable to the quiet and sometimes sleepy 'Varsity town. The red brick college is the students' Mecca, and the picturesque villages which surround it afford pleasant rambles—instructive and recreative.

The original building was such as would only accommodate twenty-one students; but so successful has the project been that the additions which have been made from time to time now give ample accommodation

for the Mistress, Vice-Mistress, Junior Bursar, five resident lecturers and one hundred and six students.

There are thirteen lecture rooms, library, chemical laboratory, hall, reading room, etc.

The clock, which stands over the original entrance to the College, is a memorial to Mrs. Manning, the first mistress, to whose sympathy and support the success of the College at the outset was largely due. The outlay on the College land and buildings has amounted to about £70,000, which sum has been collected from persons interested in the higher education of women, in legacies and other gifts.

Among legacies may be mentioned a sum amounting to nearly £20,000, bequeathed by the late Miss J. C. Gamble, who made the College her residuary legatee; a legacy of £10,000 from Mme.

Bodichon, in addition to £6,000 given during her life; and one of £1,000 from Lady Anna Gore Langton.

There have been numerous gifts, amongst which should be mentioned foundation scholarships and prizes, *is.*, the classical scholarship founded by an old student of the College and scholarships founded in memory of the Right Hon. Russell Gurney, Sir Francis Goldsmid and Miss Mary Anne Leighton respectively, a Greek Testament Prize, founded by Mrs. J. G. Gibson, and the



GIRTON COLLEGE, FROM A PAINTING.

Therese Montefiore Prize, founded by Mr. C. G. Montefiore, in memory of his late wife, who was a former student of the College. A prize has also been instituted by the College in memory of Miss J. C. Gamble.

Admittance is gained to the building by a door on the left, under the archway, where is the entrance hall, shown in our illustration. The College may be said to have been built in long wings, which admit of one room in depth, facing generally the front, with long corridors connecting them.

The first room is the reading room, which is bright and enticing to the studious resident; but probably the room of rooms at Girton is the library.



ONE OF THE CORRIDORS.

This beautiful and important part of the College has been gradually accumulated. Among its most valuable possessions, are several of the works of Lord Tennyson and Mr. Ruskin, presented by the authors, and the mathematical library of Mrs. Somerville, given to the College, after her death, by her daughter.

The hall contains portraits of Miss Emily Davies and Mme. Bodichon, who were among the founders of the College, and a copy of Richmond's portrait of the Dowager Lady Stanley, of Alderley, one of the earliest benefactors.

Each student has two rooms, separated by folding doors, or in some cases one large room, divided into two by a heavy curtain; the necessary furniture required

for these rooms is supplied by the College, such as writing-table, cupboard, arm-chair, two other chairs, tea table and plain necessities for bedroom.

On the door leading into the corridor is affixed the name of the occupant. Here we find the difference in tastes portrayed, as I have often had occasion to notice when visiting the boys' studies. To make her little study cheerful and homelike rests with each individual: some will display nicknacks and pretty needlework, etc., giving an air of home to their little abodes; other studies are strewn with literature, indicating that their occupants are more given to studious work than decoration. Another will be found adorned with lawn tennis racquets and, perhaps, a silver cup, golf or hockey club, or other trophies denoting that their owners have excelled in one or more branches of athletics.

At intervals the mistress gives an evening At Home, when numerous friends take the opportunity of visiting and inspecting the College, many of the students opening their doors to welcome the guests.

The lectures, by the resident lecturers, are given, as a rule, in the morning, and those by the visiting lecturers from Cambridge during the afternoon. These lectures are arranged for each student, and duly posted up at the beginning of the term, and from any one of these she may not absent herself, except by leave from the mistress.

The meal times are between 8 and 9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m., 6 and 7 p.m., when it is necessary that each student should "mark." The marking is a strict institution and shows that the student is not absent or ill, and proves, at the end of the term, that the requisite number of days' residence has been put in to enable the student to "keep her term," according to the University regulations.

During the afternoon those students who are not at indoor or distant lectures turn out in the College grounds for tennis, hockey or golf, while others prefer to take an invigorating walk.

Great interest is centred in the doings on the playing-grounds, more especially at the inter-college fixtures with the sister college, Newnham.

In the evenings, after dinner in hall,

coffee parties are arranged and meetings of the numerous societies and committees, of which the Girton Fire Brigade is probably the chief institution.

Most of the students in residence belong to the Fire Brigade, an institution formed in the Lent Term, 1879. Officers are duly elected, including head captain, three captains (each with two sub-captains under her) and secretary. The members, or "men," are divided into three corps, and the drills take the form of pumping, bucket passing and rope and ladder practice, and now and then a rush occasioned by an "alarm" given without notice by the head captain, who is empowered to do so when she thinks fit.

The societies for scientific and literary discussion are well supported, and these, together with the choral and debating societies, greatly contribute to enliven Girton life, and secure needed relaxation from work; for, true enough, Girton is a reading College, and several of those who enter it do so with the idea of following a professional career at the end of their College days. The qualification for a studentship at Girton is subject to the candidate passing an examination, or having previously done so, to satisfy the examining body as to the extent of her knowledge and ability.

The "Little Go," as the first University examination is termed, is the next ordeal to go through, and this is done shortly after coming up, should the student arrive in the October Term; but, as a rule, it is considered advisable to come up the preceding May Term, which not only affords the student the advantage of the extra term's study, but renders her better able to obtain an idea of the work that is expected of her, thus insuring greater chances of success. This examination generally



THE LIBRARY.

consists of elementary classics and mathematics, with a paper on Paley's Evidences, or logic; honour students including either extra mathematics or a modern language.

Each student is, no doubt, grateful when she has successfully passed her "Little Go;" for, this once over, there are no further trials—beyond the College examinations, which are instituted to acquaint the tutors and lecturers as to their students' progress—until the Tripos, or Final Degree, examination.

I do not, however, mean to infer that work is done with. No, the "Little Go" over, simply means that the student has before her three years of hard work to fit her for the great Tripos—work, however, that stands her good stead in future by training both the mind and body to cope with the contingencies of this life and its increasing difficulties.

Girton is generally grouped with some of the men's colleges for the inter-collegiate examinations, more commonly known as the "Mays;" and, gradually, as the May Term nears the last week, the candidates grow duly anxious, until the first paper is perused.

Work and worry are set aside as soon as the exam. is over, and the remainder of the term is devoted to recreation and light reading under the shade of the numerous trees in the College grounds. The organ

recitals in Trinity Chapel have also a charm for Girtonians, as also the boating contests, which the students may attend, if accompanied by a chaperon.

There are also the numerous tea-parties which assist to pass the time that intervenes between the examination and the declaration of the results by the examiners. When this arrives, a general stampede is made for the Senate House door, to which the list is attached; and here the Girton student may have the satisfaction of finding her name and college amongst the wranglers, which would entitle her, were she a man, to affix the coveted

from using the title she has earned, and which would in many cases be of advantage to her, should her walk in life necessitate her earning her own livelihood, will die a natural death, as increasing liberal ideas influence the University authorities.

The marvellous successes of Girtonians have, from time to time, formed the subject of comment in the columns of the press. Perhaps one of the most prominent, of whom the College will ever be proud, is Mrs. Montague Butler, wife of the respected Master of Trinity.

Mrs. Butler, when Miss Agnata Frances Ramsey, is recorded as having passed, in



THE WAITING ROOM, SHOWING BUST OF THE FOUNDER.

letters B.A. to her name. But at present it is only an empty honour; yet if her brother passes the identical examination, the degree would remain a handle to his name throughout his life. This hardly seems fair or just; but only a few years ago lady students were only *admitted* to have passed the examination, while now their success is publicly declared, together with their place in the class-list.

This latter concession on the part of the University is undoubtedly an advantage; and no doubt before long the objection to sex, which alone bars the woman

1887, with the following distinctions:—Part 1, Class 1 and Div. 1.

The number of students up to and including 1893, according to the report of that year, in residence from the foundation of the College was four hundred and eighty-seven. Of these, two hundred and eighty-one obtained honours according to the Cambridge University standard, and forty have passed examinations qualifying for the ordinary B.A. degree.

The College course occupies three years, half of each year being spent in residence. The academical year is approximately thus

divided: Michaelmas Term, beginning in October, nine weeks; Lent Term, beginning in January, eight weeks; and Easter Term, beginning in April, eight weeks. The charge for board, lodging and instruction is £35 per term, prepaid. This sum covers the whole of the University and College charges; but personal expenses, such as books, laundry, etc., are considered as extras. Students who desire to con-

tinue their studies at Cambridge during the Long Vacation may reside at the College in July and August at a charge varying in accordance with the number of weeks for which they may wish to stay. Further information may be obtained by intending students from the Secretary, Miss Kensington, 83, Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park, London, W.

W. CHAS. SARGENT.



THE DINING HALL.



Our Illustrations are from a splendid set of Photographs specially taken for the LUDGATE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE by Mr. R. W. Thomas, 41, Cheapside, E.C., from whom Prints from the original negatives can be obtained.



The following Schools have already appeared in THE LUDGATE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE:—ETON, HARROW, RUGBY, WINCHESTER, WESTMINSTER, CHRIST'S HOSPITAL, DULWICH, ST. PAUL'S, CHARTERHOUSE, WELLINGTON, MERCHANT TAYLORS', MARLBOROUGH, CLIFTON, CHELTENHAM, LEYS COLLEGE, BEDFORD GRAMMAR, HAILEYBURY COLLEGE, UPPINGHAM, CRANLEIGH, HIGHGATE, BRIGHTON COLLEGE, SHREWSBURY, RADLEY AND MALVERN COLLEGE (Harrow, Rugby and Clifton are out of print, but back numbers of the others can be obtained through all Booksellers, or direct from the Office, Temple House, Temple Avenue, London, E.C. Post-free, 8½d. each copy.)



TALES OF THE SERVICE.

By WALTER WOOD.

THE military tournament on the Common would be a memorable sight, everyone knew that; but no one knew how a certain thing would happen that would make the meeting never-to-be-forgotten. The General commanding the district was to be there, and the members of his staff would cluster round like bees. The Bishop, too, who loved a scarlet coat better than his own lawn, would watch the doings of man and horse, and his faithful brethren of the clergy would come in force, guided by so gracious an example. Anybody who was anything at all in the cathedral city would attend, for not every day was there a chance of having a word with both the Bishop and the General at the same gathering.

The soldier and the ecclesiastic entered the enclosure together, and were greeted with sunny smiles from every woman present.

"How good of *both* of you to come," said the wife of the Colonel of Gordon's Horse, who was the chief promoter of the tournament.

"It is my duty," replied the General, "to countenance and support anything that is for the benefit and welfare of the troops at large."

He was a tall, thin, impassive man, with a hooked nose, sharp, steady eyes, square

jaws, and skin that Eastern suns had made as dry as parchment. His words were simple, straight and pointed; for to him the art of hiding his meaning in a mist of sentences was unknown. It was part of his creed that the lives of men counted as nothing in the stern game of war. The game must be played and won, at whatever cost of pieces.

The Bishop was an eloquent divine, a lover of muscular duty, and as stout a believer in a church militant as in a fighting army. He would, in the old days, have forsaken the Church for the Service, but this was not to be; and he was a lover still of clank of steel, the rumble of artillery and the tramp of martial men.

"If the General, as a soldier, can favour us with his presence," said the Colonel's wife; "feeling that he is right in doing so, how much more can you support us, my dear Lord Bishop. For, you know, the purpose of our little gathering is to raise funds for the cleaning and decoration of the garrison church."

"A most excellent and worthy object," said the Bishop. "Let me see, how much do you want?"

"Oh, from twenty to thirty pounds," replied the lady, who uttered almost every other word in tones equivalent to italics. "I could easily have collected it, you know, but I prefer to give people

something for their money. I would much rather ask a friend to buy a ticket for five shillings than beg the same sum as a subscription."

"I quite agree with you," said the Bishop.

"People have a right to receive something for their money," remarked the General.

"They think so, at any rate, and we must humour them," said the lady. After one or two more words, she tripped away.

"I'm glad she's gone," said the General simply. "I hate italicising chatterboxes."

The Bishop did not think it seemly to make any such remark, but he saw no reason why he should contradict it.

"This is more in your line, isn't it?" asked the General, as a company of infantry in drill order marched on to the ground set apart for the tournament.

The Bishop smiled. "It is," he said. "I love the sight of a scarlet coat, especially in company with the trews. Pray tell me, what movements are they about to perform, for things change so rapidly that I have hardly time to keep abreast of innovations in the army?"

"Physical drill and bayonet exercise, that's all," returned the General.

The band of the battalion struck up at that moment; the sun, which had been hidden by some gloomy clouds, burst through them, and his lordship, an impressionable man, was enchanted. He tapped the ground gently with his foot, marking time to the music, and moved his body backward and forward as the men performed their exercises.

"What magnificent time they keep," he exclaimed at the close of the drill. "They act together like one man. No wonder that, with such perfection on parade, you are able to do such wonders on the battlefield."

"Pooh," returned the General, who was watching the troops languidly. "It's a mere trifle. Any batch of school-boys could be taught it. Wait until the cavalry come on. The thunder of the hoofs and



THE SOLDIER AND ECCLESIASTIC ENTERED.

the rush and swing of man and horse rouse one up in a way that infantry never can. I may be prejudiced, but I take far more interest in wondering what will become of that long, lank cavalry man, with the foolish face and sandy hair, than I take in the future of that smart little officer of infantry near him."

"For my part, I'm more interested in foot soldiers," replied the Bishop. "I love more to hear their steady tramp along the roads, keeping time to the music of the band, than I love to hear the thunder of the hoofs of cavalry. I always picture the horrors of a charge, with the maddened animals rushing off with you and beating out your brains, as your weakened grasp loses its hold of the bridle, and you slip from the saddle to the ground."

The General looked grim. "My dear Bishop," he said; "I'm not so sure your foot soldiers would come out any the better because of not being mounted. They would have the regiments of cavalry swooping on them. It's far more comfortable to be on the backs of the horses than under their bellies."

The Bishop shuddered, and fell to thinking.

"Calves seems to be in a dismal mood," said a subaltern of infantry named Tatham to a comrade of the name of Dale, who was seated beside him, smoking. "Calves" was a disrespectful allusion to his lordship's legs, and was largely used by subalterns in the city. The bishop knew of it, and in his secret soul rather liked the nickname.

"I fancy he's groaning about the horrors of war. I couldn't help hearing something about men's brains being scattered as I passed the Bishop and the General a second since," said Tatham.



"And only a couple of days ago," observed Dale, "I heard him at Mrs. Gordon's At Home, wailing because he hadn't been allowed to enter the army."

"Some folks are never satisfied," proceeded Tatham. "I'd exchange with the old Johnny, if I had the chance, to-morrow. By Jove, just think of the difference between us—pay like mine——"

"And drudgery," put in his friend feelingly.

"And drudgery," added Tatham. "Little of the first, and a vast lot of the second—and pay like his and his work."

"The same old game all through," observed Dale, with more sympathy than ever. "You find it in all ranks of life; somebody does the work, and somebody

else gets paid for it." He heaved a sigh, and smoked in temporary bitterness of spirit.

"Calves is fond of soldiers; he has a son in the Militia," resumed Tatham, after a pause, and with the malice of youth. "I suppose that's why he's frozen on to the General so much of late. I wonder if he thinks it's a good way of securing promotion for his offspring?"

"And the General has an awful respect for a parson, especially one in high place with a big living. He has a son who is a curate, so they can perhaps work things comfortably between them. By George! Think of it—a bishop with four or five thousand a year, and a palace to live in——"

"And nothing to do," interposed Tatham.

"Well, as to that," returned Dale magnanimously, "give him his due. Of course, you mustn't forget that he has to look after the curates and vicars, and that sort of thing, in his diocese, or district, or whatever they call it."

"And has to do a jolly lot of talking and preaching, not to mention thinking," said Tatham.

"Well, as far as that goes, one sermon will go a long way; you can travel with it round a whole country," said his friend.

"I don't know what on earth the two can see in watching a show like this," said Tatham, smothering a yawn. "I think it's awfully slow; but, of course, a fellow's bound to turn up and watch these things. I'm certain the General would rather be having a nap after his lunch than fiddling about here, watching soldiers do elementary drill, and pipers strut about

THE CAVALRY SWOOPING ON THEM.

like peacocks, while they make the most infernal noise with their fiendish-looking instruments."

"There's to be a good piece of business later on, when the musical drill's been done," said his comrade; "and that's 'Sword v. Lance' on the programme. It's a meeting between Grayson and Hilder, of the cavalry—Grayson with the lance, and Hilder with the single-stick. It'll be a stunning contest, and a stiff one, too, for you know the men aren't common Tommies. They're both well-born—failed in their exams., and that sort of thing. They're just the sort of men to keep it up to the bitter end, and to give each other beans. I'm quite interested in it: sounds like a tournament of old, doesn't it?"

"That puts a different aspect on the matter," said Tatham. "I shall watch the thing with interest myself. Meetings of skill—cricket, football, athletics, and all that kind of business, you know, arouses a fellow's spirit. It isn't like drill-books. Suppose we have a little bet on the event? It'll make the thing a lot more interesting."

Dale looked round. "All right," he said. "I don't care how we go, for both men are equal. Suppose we bet equal?"

"Done," said Tatham. "We'll mention the matter later, when these chaps have got clear of the ground."

He nodded, as he spoke, towards the pipers of their battalion. They had entered the field, and were making extraordinary noises prior to wrenching

out of the pipes the regimental quick-step.

There is no more gorgeous spectacle on earth than a pipe-major in full array. His dignity is splendid, his expression is unattainable except by years of practice, and his carriage surpasses in stateliness that of any other creature walking on two legs.

"Old Cock-a-hoop excels even himself to-day," said Tatham. "He thinks nobody's looking at anybody but him, and listening to nothing but the squeal of his instruments. And all the time they're laughing at his swagger, and cursing the din he and his are making."

The pipe-major, oblivious to these unfriendly comments, was droning on his pipes with looks that quelled the flippant spirits of the younger instrumentalists and aroused the admiring envy of the seniors. One of his spotless white spats rose and fell regularly on the grass as he marked time with his foot, and the feathers of his bonnet waved fantastically as he moved his head to and fro in unison.

The skirl of the pipes ceased suddenly, and the chief, with majestic gravity, led the way off the grass.

As the pipers marched away, two small boys from the dépôt, in whom, as yet, reverence found no place, laughed shrilly. Then

one cried, "Cock-a-hoop!" and the other, in a life-like manner, imitated the crowing of a fowl.

The piper turned pale, then red under the outrage, and muttered that when he



MAKING EXTRAORDINARY NOISES.

had the chance, he would seize the youngsters by the lugs and bring their heads together, to the end that he might teach them manners.

Tatham kept his countenance until the pipers had passed; then he looked at Dale, and the two burst into laughter.

"Shut up," said Tatham suddenly; "there's the old woman. Watch her tack on again to Calves and the General."

The Colonel's wife tripped up and rejoined the officer and the ecclesiastic.

"What charming music we have had from Scotia's national instrument," she said. She was, at times, inclined to be poetical, and such was her condition now.

"It is, indeed, inspiring," said his lordship, with a smile.

"I'd rather hear the music of a Burmah gong," said the General, "or a tune on the bells they have in some of the town halls about here."

"Ah, General, that arises from your want of musical education, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Gordon archly, and remembering her italics; "but if you do not care for that, I'm sure you can't but love the next performance — the musical ride. See how the dear horses go about it. I'm positive they must have a great deal more intelligence than some people give them credit for."

While they were speaking, a score of dragoons with lances had entered, and were going through the musical drill to the inspiring accompaniment of the cavalry band.

"Oh, how lovely!" exclaimed Mrs. Gordon. "See how the dear creatures thread in and out, and advance and retire; and look at their eyes and faces: they know, I'm sure, what they're doing, and how to do it, if not exactly the why and wherefore of it."

"Horses are admittedly creatures of high intelligence," said the Bishop.

"And if a man has a soul and an after state, and all that sort of thing, why shouldn't a well-bred horse?" asked the lady, looking, as she spoke, at the General.

"I'm sure *I* don't know," answered he, feeling that he was expected to make some sort of reply. Then he added slyly: "That's more in the Bishop's line."

His lordship had no wish to enter upon questions such as this, and he evaded an answer by looking at the sky in a searching manner, and saying that he feared there was about to be a heavy shower. "The sky has turned almost black while we have been talking," he said. "But, really, one can become so vastly interested in conversation that one is quite regardless of the elements."

He smiled again, being a man of the world as well as a bishop, and the Colonel's wife, feeling that this was a delicate tribute to her power and charm as a talker, smiled also. She looked suspiciously at the clouds all the same, and



ONE CRIED, "COCK-A-HOO!"

shortly afterwards found an excuse to get under shelter, and so secure her smart new dress and bonnet from the ill effects of rain.

The Bishop and the General breathed freely again when she had departed, and his lordship said that, after all, he believed the rain would keep off until the tournament was ended.

"I hope so," said the General, "for I'm really interested in the sword *v.* lance competition. It will be an exceptional meeting. Here come the two men."

Grayson and Hilder trotted proudly on to the field, and the spectators cheered as the lance and singlestick were chalked.

Tatham and Dale were deeply engaged in arranging their bet, and many other pairs were doing the same thing. Even the two small boys from the depôt were

seized with the mania, and laid a bet of a half-penny each—their financial state being low, and their credit worthless.

Perhaps his lordship knew instinctively what was being done; or it may be that for once he succumbed, in a most unclerical fashion, to the temptation that arose within him.

What he did was meant playfully and innocently, for he was the last man in the world to set a bad example to his people.

"General," he whispered, plucking his friend's sleeve, with a sly little smile, but looking cautiously round to make sure that no one heard him; "General, let us have a small bet on the result of the encounter—not," he added hastily, for the General had raised his eyebrows in astonishment, "not as a *real* thing, you know—only to give piquancy to the spectacle."

The General laughed. "My lord," he said, "such a lead cannot but be right. I never gamble, on principle, but I will make an exception in your case. I will bet a case of champagne to a box of cigars that the dragoon wins. That, I think, is the way to put it."

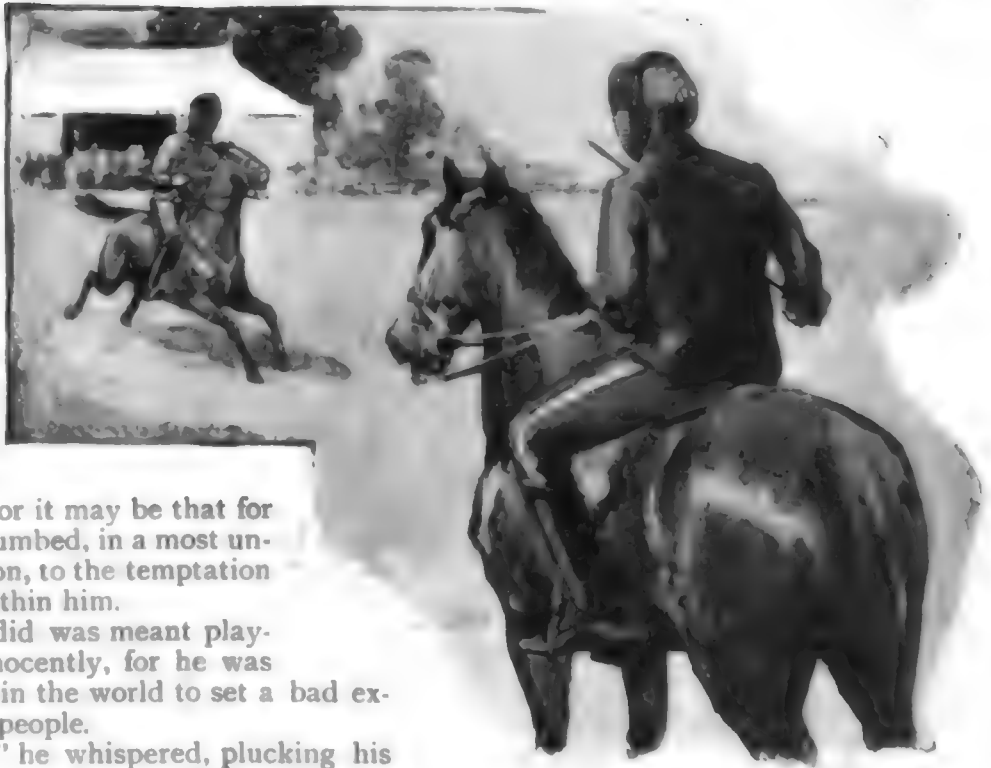
The Bishop looked uneasy, and hesitated for a moment before accepting. "Perhaps," he said, "I ought not to have been the one to suggest such a thing. I really wouldn't have thought of it if I had imagined for a moment that it would—eh—"

"Lead me astray?" suggested the General, with a smile.

The Bishop looked round again. No one could hear them, and he replied: "Well, eh—not exactly that; but influence you in the—eh—wrong direction."

"Pooh," laughed the General lightly; "don't let that disturb you. I'm as far gone as I can be. Look upon me as a lost sheep, and consider my offer taken."

The Bishop hesitated only for a moment longer. After all, he told himself, the



THE CONTEST

General was old enough to take care of and look after himself. Then he nodded acquiescence, and the two turned their thoughts to the men on the ground.

It was a spirited, brilliant contest—everybody agreed upon that.

The lancer and the dragoon galloped, trotted, walked, stood still, advanced and retired, made many feints to take each other off his guard, and in the end did not get within striking distance.

Big drops of rain began to fall, but no one moved. Many tournaments had been seen, but never one that offered a display of skill like this.

The Bishop was excited beyond control. His voice rose frequently and loudly in encouragement of the man he favoured, and at last the lancer heard him. His face flushed with pleasure beneath his mask, and he settled himself to do his best.

When he next advanced he did so slowly until near his foe; then he plunged his spurs into his horse and swept towards him.

As he shot along, the dragoon nimbly spurred aside, and as the lancer dashed past, struck him with his singlestick.

The weapon swerved, and, falling on the lancer's back, it snapped with a loud crack.

There was a shout of laughter and cries of disapproval.

"That will never be allowed," exclaimed the Bishop. "If it is, I shall protest on the man's behalf."

"You may trust the officers who have charge to see that all is fairly done," replied the General. "See, another singlestick is already being brought."

The men faced each other again. "This time will settle it, I'm certain," said the Bishop.

"I believe it will," returned the General. "I hope so, at any rate, for a heavy storm is breaking."

The Bishop glanced at the sky, and saw that it was covered with leaden clouds. He heard the rumbling of thunder, and one or two great drops of rain fell on his upturned face.

As the combatants faced each other for the last encounter, the fringe of onlookers melted, and cavalry and infantry ran into barracks for shelter.

"Had we not better go inside?" asked the General.

"No, no," said the Bishop eagerly; "pray let us see the end of it. We can step into the ante-room of the *depôt* in a moment, if the storm break. We are standing in front of the very door."

"As you please," observed the General, and he continued his impassive watch.

Lancer and dragoon swept on once more to meet each other. The thud of the horses' hoofs mingled with an angry murmur from the gloomy sky. The iron shoes whipped up the soil and sent it high in the air in little showers.

The Bishop gripped the General's arm as the men neared each other.

"The lancer wins," his lordship gasped.

"The dragoon will strike him down, and win just before the storm comes," answered the General.

The horses were within a lance's length of each other when the sky was rent by a gigantic fork of flame.

The Bishop uttered a cry, and put his hands before his face. "What a fearful flash," he said.

The thunder crashed and rolled with deafening sound, and the rain began to descend in what seemed like a solid wall.

The General, unmoved, was watching the combatants. They had met, and were drawn up head to head.

The singlestick lay upon the shoulder of the lancer, and the end of the lance was touching the neck of the dragoon.

The Bishop opened his eyes and looked through the rain at the figures.

"I'm afraid that neither of us has won," he said. "I hope they will be dismissed. The storm is too terrible for anything."

"Their dismissal is unnecessary," observed the General, with a slight shudder, turning to enter the mess.

"Why?" asked the Bishop.

"Look," returned the General, simply.

His lordship gazed. The horses and their riders did not move. They were as rigid and as silent as a group in stone.

"My God!" exclaimed the Bishop; "you don't mean to say that —"

"Yes, they are dead," replied the General impassively. "That flash of lightning killed both men and beasts. Our wager has been settled for us. Let us get under shelter, for the rain is soaking."



RIGID AND SILENT.

A Passion Flower.

By MRS. ALFRED HART,

Author of "A Double Ruin," "A Modern Martyr," "Tired Love,"
"A Society Sphinx," etc.



THEY were sitting in the conservatory, passion flowers above them, passion flowers behind them, and they were talking, so they thought, platonically. Both had agreed that there is nothing worth living for; that existence is more or less a farce, and that love—well, that such an over-rated thing as love was almost beneath discussion! Then they looked into each other's eyes and wondered.

The man was pale, a trifle weary looking, with a face once seen, never forgotten. She possessed a charm, a *beauté du diable*, that rendered her dangerous, so said her enemies—adorable, her friends.

"Max," said the woman—she certainly had a beautiful voice—"it is five years since we last sat here. Tell me, what have your travels taught you and how is it that you have not married?"

"Maude," said he, crossing his legs and leaning back easily in his chair, "it is five years since we last sat here; tell me, what has your home-staying taught you and how is it that you are now divorced?"

"Repetition is *banal*," said she, "and your last question quite brutal."

"I was always *banal* and brutal—at least, so you used to say. Your present opinion is just an echo of the past."

"It seems to me that the present is always an echo of the past. The only thing open to speculation is the future."

"Because it is uncertain?" said Max.

"Not always," she replied. "I knew that some day you would come to me here and we should see in each other changes that—that —"

"Yes?"

"That I should wake up, as I did this morning, and find a patch of grey hair, and wonder the best restorer to use. Do you know of a good hair restorer?"

"The same as ever," he continued bitterly; "bread in one hand and a hard stone in the other! A good restorer you ask? That depends where the grey has trespassed."

"Here, on the temple. Look, when I lift this curl it is quite visible. Do you see?"

The pale man leaned forward at her request, and looked at the soft, dark curls. "Oh, the left temple?" he queried. "A little mole, near the eye-brow."

"How well you remember!" she answered quickly.

"Oh, no. Didn't we agree that nothing is worth remembering?"

"Of course we did," she replied. "We will therefore merely confine ourselves to the hour."

"You are not changed, Maude. You have even gained —"

"Experience. I am thirty!"

"That celebrated, fascinating age. You know a woman only begins to be fascinating when she has a past written upon her."

"Then I must be a singularly blank page," picking a passion flower and fastening it at the bosom of her gown. "Do you remember the days when we were enthusiastically young, Max?"

"Yes," he said, tempted to recall her previous speech. "You were a charming little devil!"

"Satan lecturing sin," she quoted, flashing at him the brilliant smile. "But I have had my *Purgatory*," she ended below her breath.

"Such a charming little devil," he proceeded dreamily. "I used to think —" He broke off abruptly. "Why did you marry, Maude?"

"Caprice," said she; "that is to say, I looked at a man; he looked at me. We

thought it would be pleasant to marry. We did—*voilà tout !*"

"Highly interesting."

"*N'est ce pas ?* And you, why have you remained single?"

"Caprice! I looked at a woman, who did *not* look at me."

"Most interesting."

"These little matters generally are—to the one looked at! But you have not answered my question."

"Nor you mine."

"I believe you asked me what my travels had taught me? Everything and nothing. There are certain things a man never learns—one of them, a woman's heart."

"Did you try to, then, in every land?" She thrust forward her little foot and studied the point minutely as she made the question.

"Naturally," watching her from beneath his half-closed eyes.

"Ah! I forgot. You once regretted that it was not legal to have a wife in every capital. I suppose it would be pleasant to have *un chez soi* in every clime, a sort of private hotel where one could count on a good dinner. But your theory never could have reckoned upon those obliged to stay at home. Life is so ruled by the almighty dollar, and those denied it can but illustrate the old proverb, '*toujours perdrix !*'"

"You are as daring as ever."

"No, merely sensible."

By mutual instinct, they had turned to each other, and the woman wondered why the pale face before her, with its tell-tale lines, was so attractive; the man, why he found the little white lock of his friend even more seductive than either brown or golden tress.

"Talk," said she, shifting a trifle uneasily in her chair.

"Does silence displease you?"

"Yes."

"Why? I just love it."

"Why?"

"Because it pulsates—because it makes me dream. Shall I dive into the past, and tell you some of my dreams?"

"Do."

"No—you would only smile. Realise, too, how I should have to conjugate the verb 'to remember.'"

"Poor man!"

"I have wondered at times," he suddenly resumed, "how I should have

enjoyed my travels had *you* been with me."

"Really?"

"What we should have said and done had we 'ransacked the climes together.'"

She sighed quickly. "What a good thing it was you ransacked them alone. I am a detestable travelling companion—so cross. I want to sleep when I should be awake, and wake up when I should sleep, and always feel hungry when there is no food at hand."

"You may jeer," said the man, with his odd smile—the smile she always waited for. "But there were one or two things I should like to have enjoyed with you; for instance, the Passion Play at Oberammergau."

"Ah—h," said she; "one of my dead wishes."

"It was by chance I heard it was to be given; and, although it happened to be a most inconvenient time, I packed up my trunks and started. You had been married a year, I think."

"Yes. And the Play?"

"I cannot describe it. Of its beauty I cannot speak. I felt it, and I thought of you when I chose the highest seat in that strange, open-air theatre. There was the surge of human heads; below, the Tragedy of the Cross. Through it all, was wild music, and above—God's heaven."

"And you thought of me?"

"Of you. Whether you were happy."

"I am not of the stuff of which happy women are made, Max."

"Tell me all about it, dear. Was he very cruel?"

"Don't!" She put out her hand pleadingly. "Don't pity me. I can bear anything but that. I have stood alone, and I can stand alone to the end, I suppose. Nothing is worth regretting—nothing worth weeping for. And there is always the grave."

"The grave for you—you woman child. You will live to be happy yet. *Shall* be," he muttered below his breath.

"Tell you all about it?" she presently queried. "Have I not said it was a caprice?"

"Surely more than that?"

"He was good-looking—one of those handsome brutes that bruise the mind as well as the body of a woman. I could have forgiven his cruelties, but never my



WE TRIED TO GO DOWN THE RIVER.

mental humiliation. Oh!" clasping her hands together, "it was terrible! Always hungry, always thirsty, always starved. If he could have understood me now and then, I could have borne it. He looked upon me merely as an instrument whereon to play his own jarring discords, unheeding there were other melodies to be drawn. I once had theories about marriage," she smiled, "and dreams of love's sweet agony. Love has two agonies, I found.

I acted a passion play of my own, Max, with my heart as sole spectator. But you look pale—paler than your wont—and you have actually forgotten to light a cigarette. See, here is a match."

She took a little silver box and struck a match, guarding the flame an instant with her hand.

The pale man watched her as she held the flickering light nearer, then, with characteristic calm, blew it out.

"That was rude," said she.

He caught her by the wrist, and made her meet his gaze.

She didn't flinch, eye met eye; and in that glance began a fight between love and reason.

For an instant the woman bowed beneath some spell, which neither as maid nor wife had she ever experienced. Then a great desire to weep seized her.

Instead, she said; "Are we rehearsing private theatricals? Dear Max, our attitude is very dramatic."

And still he looked at her.

She laughed nervously. "Really you are extraordinary," she began again. "Are you trying to peer into my heart and extract the fragrance of days that are gone?"

"Are you true to yourself?" he asked.

Unconsciously her proud head drooped. "Are we women ever true to ourselves? Are we not by the lives we lead made to act, to be a lie?"

"But there must be a moment in every life," he said softly, "when each one of us we have our chance. It is not often that two simultaneously realise this. Often, to one, the knowledge comes too soon—to the other, too late. But this shall not be our fate. You sweet, proud woman! do I not read you? Do I not know better the workings of your tender heart? We play at pessimism! It is a cheap game, my Maude. We say that life is a barren sepulchre, that it reeks with the dust of dead desires—and all the while we know that there is nothing in creation so imperial as love. What, you weep! Oh, my queen, are you true to yourself after all?"

The length of a little table lay between them; an arm of each stretched across it. The woman bowed her head thereon, and silently wept.

"If you knew what I have suffered!" she said at last; "how hungry, how hungry!"

"I know it all, dear."

"To feel your heart racked and crucified, and to have to smile. To know that somewhere in God's wide world there must be one who can understand you. I have consoled others for this same pain, but none could ever console me. And now it is all ended."

"Do you remember the day we stood in the cornfield together, Maude?" His voice was wondrous sweet. "A lark was singing, and you threw your arms towards it as if your spirit yearned to join it. What a wild, untamed creature you were. I thought the time had not come to speak."

"Ah! how you understand me," she murmured, her sobs growing gradually less.

He drew her to him.

"And that day we drifted down the river; you lay among your cushions, such a sweet, tired thing, and I pelted you with wild flowers."

"I have one of those flowers still, and the bracelet you gave me. 'To wear a day and break,' you had inscribed; but I wear it still."

His eyes gleamed passionately. He did not seek to fold her to him, yet possessing that rare wisdom to feel that there are moments of exaltation when a mere touch is gross. She should come to him her own way. Few women are permitted this luxury.

Presently she lifted her head. "How weak of me to cry," she murmured; "but I am stronger now. Oh, why did you come to me in my weakness. It is not fair."

"Is life quite so dark as it was an hour ago?" He rose and stood above her.

A little smile flickered round her lips. "That is my secret."

His heart leaped as he noted the sweetness of her voice. "And if I wrest it from you—what then?"

For answer, she drew the passion flower across his lips.



THE AUTHOR OF "BOX AND COX."

CHARACTERS.

MR. SILVERSIDE.
LIEUT. LOMAX, R.N.
HANNIBAL WIGG.
JOHN PLUMP, a Gardener.
JESSIE LUPTON, Niece of SILVERSIDE.
MRS. WIGG.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—R. means Right; L., Left;
R. D., Right Door; L. D., Left Door; S. E.,
Second Entrance; U. E., Upper Entrance;
M. D., Middle Door; F., the Flat; D. F., Door
in Flat.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—R. means Right; L., Left;
C., Centre; R. C., Right of Centre; L. C., Left
of Centre.

SCENE—Pleasure grounds attached to Mr. SILVER-
SIDE'S villa at Teddington, consisting of flower
beds, lawn, gravel walks, all very prim and neat.
The river, partially seen at back, with a portion
of a landing-place. Large tree R. C. at back.
Greenhouse at R., with part of a garden wall be-
hind it. Rustic tables. Garden chairs, wheel-
barrow and garden tools at L.

Enter SILVERSIDE at R. followed by JOHN PLUMP.

SIL. (as he enters). No—no—no. I won't have it,
John Plump. I've put up with it long enough.
Never do I come for a walk in my pleasure grounds
at Silverside Villa but I find the grass sprinkled
with sandwich papers, the landing-place all of a slop,
and boot marks of the commonest description half-
an-inch deep in my gravel walks!

JOHN. It's them plaguy Britannia Tea Gardens as
brings 'em here, sir. They gets out of their boats
yonder (pointing to landing-stage) when I'm having
my meals. I can't be always a-watching 'em. I
must have my three meals a day.

Mrs. Wigg's Water-Party.

In One Act.

By JOHN MADDISON MORTON,

Author of "Box and Cox," &c.

SIL. Then have them all at once! That'll save
time. Holloa! (seeing a piece of paper on ground
and picking it up with the end of his stick) here we are
again. (Examining paper). Half a page of the *War
Cry*. Been round some savoury boiled beef! I can
smell it a yard off. (Suddenly.) By-the-by, John,
don't forget you've got to go over to Kingston for
my new fishing-tackle. Here's a list of the things I
want. [Gives paper to JOHN.]

JOHN (reading). "Hooks, floats, landing-net,
worms —"

SIL. Yes; don't forget the worms, John.

JOHN. Hadn't I better bring some fish as well, sir?
You'll never catch none here.

SIL. Go along.

JOHN. All right. But how about them visitors
from the tea gardens, sir!

SIL. I shall be on the look-out for them myself,
this morning. And just let me catch any of them,
that's all (flourishing his stick. JOHN runs out at R.)
This comes of trusting to a swindling estate agent. I
hire this villa, at an exorbitant rent, for the sole object
of enjoying what they call the splendid fishing in the
neighbourhood. I don't know what it may be in the
neighbourhood, but it's anything but first-rate in the
river. All the sport I've had during two months of
incessant application to my favourite pastime being
about a dozen and a half of juvenile gudgeons.
(Looking off at L.) Sh! Here's Jessie.

Enter JESSIE, carrying a tennis racket and dressed in
a simple morning costume.

Well, Jessie, been practising your lawn tennis, eh?

JESSIE. You must have the lawn swept first,
please, uncle. I found it all over egg-shells, heads
and tails of shrimps, broken crockery and ginger-
beer bottles.

SIL. (aside). Those confounded Britannias again!

JESSIE. But you seem a little put out, uncle dear!

SIL. No; nothing out of the common. Only an-
other ream or two of sandwich papers decorating my
grass plots—that's all! Never mind; I shall have
a new gardener here to-day on trial, and I'll make
him look after the premises better than that old
idiot, John Plump.

JESSIE. A new gardener, uncle!

SIL. Yes, a man who knows his work. I won't
have any more boys about the place; they do more
harm than good. I sent the last one I had about his
business this morning.

JESSIE. What! Poor little Dick? Why?

SIL. Because "poor little Dick," as you call him,
was always munching raw onions. I found the
young ruffian had actually appropriated one of my best
forcing beds for the gratification of his vulgar
appetite!

JESSIE. But this new gardener, uncle? Who
is he?

SIL. A thoroughly experienced man. Took a prize
for mustard and cress last year. Who, in addition to
his horticultural and floricultural acquirements, will
also be able to wait at table.

JESSIE (aside). How very awkward this will be for

Jack if he should happen to try and see me to-day. If I could only get rid of uncle for a little while. (*Aloud.*) Well, uncle, aren't you going down to the lock this morning to try and catch a barbel?

SIL. Certainly not. If there's a barbel who wants to be caught, he must come to me. Besides, the water's too bright.

JESSIE (*smoothingly*). Well, if I were a fisherman, I wouldn't be beaten by the water. Not I!

SIL. Why not? I'm sure I've flogged the water enough. Ha, ha! I may as well get my fishing-rod ready for John when he returns with the tackle.

[*Hurries off R.*]

JESSIE. Dear, dear, what shall I do? Fully relying on uncle's absence, I telegraphed to Jack that he might come and see me for half an hour. I must put the usual signal up to warn him off—hoist the red flag, as Jack calls it. (*Ties a red handkerchief to a bush near the landing-stage.*) There. I'll just scribble a few lines to tell him what has happened. (*Writes on a leaf from her tablets, and places it under a brick near the landing-stage.*) There. To be left till called for. (*Then seeing SILVERSIDE coming.*) Just in time.

Re-enter SILVERSIDE, with fishing-rod, at R.

SIL. Now then, I'm ready for John and the worms. By-the-by, Jessie, don't forget our dinner party to-day—six o'clock, sharp. And be sure you behave civilly to young Wagstaff. He's got lots of tin, and certainly isn't so ugly as he might be, or such a fool as he looks. Besides, it's evident he admires you, or he wouldn't look at you in the idiotic way he does.

JESSIE. I thoroughly detest, loathe and abominate that man, uncle.

SIL. If it's only that, you'll soon get over it. Besides, he's got some of the best fishing in the county. What more can you possibly require in a husband? But I see how it is; you're still hankering after that jackanapes, young Lomax. But as your trustee, I've some voice in the disposal of your property—remember that, miss.

JESSIE (*pouting*). I'm sure, uncle, you can't say a word against Jack, my old playmate. If he hasn't got lots of *skinners*, as he calls them, no one can say he is mercenary.

SIL. Who said he was? But he's in the navy—that's quite enough. That class of men are always catching yellow fevers and wooden legs. I knew a man who had two, and I believe he'd have had more if he could.

JESSIE (*crying*). And after two years absence in the Pacific—where it's always blowing great guns, as Jack calls 'em—it's very hard if I'm not allowed to be friends with him. But I will—in spite of you—in spite of Mr. Wagstaff—in spite of everybody. Oh, oh!

[*Exit sobbing at R.*]

SIL. (*calling after her*). Don't cry, dear! (*Shouting.*) Don't blubber! A plague take all nieces, I say! What business had brother John to leave his girl on my hands—and that girl a daughter. I declare I'm quite in a fever, so I'll just lie down under that tree, in the shade, and try to get forty winks.

[*Sits down under tree and gradually falls asleep.*]

He is scarcely seen by audience. A short pause.

WIGG is seen coming up from landing stage. He is dressed in exaggerated cockney boating costume. Comes forward.

WIGG. There! I've tied the boat up. So now to look about me a bit. I wonder if I've landed at the right place. (*Seeing red handkerchief.*) All right,

there's Maria's signal. I've got to those blessed Britannia Tea Gardens at last, and pretty well time, too. Whew. (*Wiping his face.*) A very nice arrangement of Maria's, to shut up the shop and have a day's outing with the kids—baby and all—only a dozen of 'em—in a pleasure boat, too. I knew how 'twould turn out. When we got to Westminster Bridge, there wasn't a vessel big enough to hold the whole fourteen of us, so, in an excess of generosity, Maria decided that a couple of "jolly young watermen" should pull her and the kids up to Teddington, and I might come after them by myself with the provisions. "And be sure," says she, "to look out for a red handkerchief, so that you may know where to stop." (*Looking about.*) I don't see any signs of 'em, but I suppose they're somewhere about the gardens. In the meantime, I may as well bring up the hamper with the crockery and provisions.

[*Disappears at landing stage, taking the red handkerchief as he passes and putting it in his pocket.*]

SIL. (*waking*). How sleepy the country air does make one. Holloa—I wonder what disturbs the water so? Heyday, there's a boat fastened to my landing stage—and not only a boat, but a man in it. Actually under my very nose! What next, I wonder? And what the dence is he carrying on his back?

WIGG reappears, carrying a large hamper on his back, which he deposits on stage with a run.

WIGG. I hope I ain't gone and smashed the crockery; Maria's precious particular about her crockery.

SIL. (*listening*). Maria? Crockery?

WIGG (*looking round him*). Well, Maria couldn't have spotted a nicer place for a picnic—that I will say!

SIL. (*aside*). Picnic? Confound it, that beats sandwiches! I'll make an example of this ruffian.

WIGG (*who has opened the hamper, and taken out the table cloth, which he spreads on the stage; then the plates, which he lays out*). Holloa. Here's one of the plates smashed (*throwing pieces of plate away, close to where SILVERSIDE is, who jumps aside*). What's this? Here's a go! Here's the cork come out of the salad-dressing all over the table napkins. (*Throwing three or four table napkins about the stage—then suddenly seeing SILVERSIDE*) Heyday. Who's our old friend, I wonder?—one of the waiters of the establishment, I suppose; (*calling*) here, Robert—William—whatever your name is—I think you might come and lend a fellow a hand, instead of staring there and doing nothing. If this is your style of waiting on your master's customers, you can't be of much use when your gardens are full.

SIL. "Master's customers!" "Gardens!"

WIGG. Yes, the bowling green—skittle ground.

SIL. (*aside*). Here's another maniac thinks he's at those infernal tea gardens!

WIGG. Look here, William. Do you think you could conveniently get a fellow a pint of bitter within three quarters of an hour?

SIL. Oh, you want some beer, do you? (*Aside.*) Ha! ha! I rather like this. His impudence is positively refreshing; the gross way he insults me is quite a treat. (*Aloud.*) We don't keep beer here.

WIGG. Keep it; no. I'll be bound you get rid of it as soon as you can.

SIL. I mean, we don't sell it.

WIGG. Don't you? What a disappointment for Maria. Well, then, William, what do you charge for hot water? I dare say it's equally refreshing—when you're used to it.

SIL. Hot water?

WIGG. Yes; by the head. Or suppose you say the price by the painful!

SIL. (*aside*). This fellow's perfectly delicious! (*Aloud.*) I'll go up to the house and inquire.

(*Aside*) You needn't be afraid of my not keeping you in *hot water*, my friend. What can detain that old fool, John Plump, so long? Never mind, the new gardener will be here soon, and if I can only manage to detain my facetious friend here —

WIGG (*who has been constantly busy taking things out of hamper*). By-the-by, William, suppose you help me with the other hamper out of the boat. That's where the provisions are. Such a spread—leg of mutton, beef-steak pie, jam tart, six Abernethy biscuits and a pint of one and four sherry, besides barcelonas and bull's-eyes for the junior branches.

SIL. (*suddenly aside*). Here's a chance. He came in a boat. He can only *get away* in a boat. I'll cut it adrift. I will, by Jove!—provisions and all.

[*Disappears towards landing stage on tiptoe.*]

WIGG (*who is busy laying the knives and forks*). Now, William, tell me when you're ready.

SIL. (*reappearing. Aside*). I've done it! There goes the boat down the stream. *Diner's* at Teddington—dinner's at Gravesend. Ha, ha! (*Aloud.*) Be back directly, sir; just going to see about the hot water.

[*Goes out at R.*]

WIGG (*admiring the table-cloth*). There! That's a table-cloth fit for a lord mayor to sit down to. Maria can't complain of my not getting everything in apple-pie order. I wonder what's become of her and the rest of the Wiggues; they must be somewhere about the grounds. I'll just have a look round.

[*Goes off at L.*]

LIEUT. LOMAX, in plain blue frock coat, white trousers, and waistcoat, appears as if coming from landing stage. He looks cautiously round.

LOMAX. Jessie's warning signal not flying. Then all's safe, and I may venture. She evidently expects me; so I suppose old Silverside is gone on one of his fishing excursions. By-the-by, I had better send the boat away. (*Speaking off towards landing stage.*) You can return in half an hour, Williams. (*Coming forward.*) Dear, darling Jessie, but for this happy contrivance on her part about the signal, I should almost be debarred the happiness of seeing her. I won't consent to her quarrelling with her uncle on my account. But I confess I don't at all object to dodging the old boy now and then. (*Advances, and his foot catches in the table cloth, scattering knives, forks, etc., in all directions.*) What the deuce is that!

Enter Wigg, running, at L.

WIGG. Hallo! Here's a pretty scene! (*To LOMAX.*) I say, governor, is it you who's been walking into my knives and forks in this sort of way!

[*Beginning to pick up things.*]

LOMAX. A thousand pardons, I'm sure! Preparations for a dinner, I see. (*Aside.*) Can old Silverside be going in for "Dinners at a shilling a head?" Allow me to help you.

[*Helps Wigg to pick up and replace things.*]

WIGG (*shouting*). Mind what you're at with that mustard-pot! Don't you see it's upside down? (*Aside.*) A decent young chap, this. I'll ask Maria to let him join our party; then I'll get him to go for the beer. Looks like a full captain of a penny steamer by his uniform.

LOMAX (*aside*). A new man here, evidently! Don't remember having seen him before.

WIGG. Whew! Rather warm, captain!

LOMAX (*aside*). Sufficiently familiar! I wonder whom he takes me for!

WIGG. I've just sent William up to the house.

LOMAX. William! Who is he!

WIGG. The old waiter.

LOMAX. Waiter! Is this a joke!

WIGG. It's anything but a joke for the visitors when he goes to fetch anything. But I say, young man, you don't happen to have seen anything of Maria—have you?

LOMAX. Maria! Who's Maria?

WIGG. My wife; and the young uns; she was to meet me here at the Britannia Tea Gardens.

LOMAX. The Britannia Tea Gardens! (*Aside.*) Here's a discovery! (*Aloud.*) Oh, then, I see you are preparing for a picnic!

WIGG. Yes. I'm laying the foundations!

LOMAX (*aside*). It would really be kindness to tell this poor fellow of his blunder. (*Taking Wigg's arm and bringing him forward mysteriously.*) I don't wish to frighten you!

WIGG. Well, that's lucky; because you wouldn't if you *did*.

LOMAX. I mean, haven't you made a mistake?

WIGG. Lots of 'em in my time.

LOMAX. In a word, do you know where you are?

WIGG. Well, I can't give you the exact longitude from Greenwich, but I believe I'm *somewhere* (*knowingly*).

LOMAX. There you're wrong; you'll be *nowhere* if they find you out.

WIGG. They can find me out fast enough, if they want; 'cause I left word where I was going. Though it ain't likely they'd come all this distance after me for a bundle of wood or a box of matches.

LOMAX (*grasping his arm*). You are in the lion's den!

WIGG. A branch establishment of the Zoological Gardens?

LOMAX. Worse! A thousand times worse. You're on a gentleman's private grounds!

WIGG. What! These tea gardens? What's the gentleman's name?

LOMAX. Silverside. A retired pork-butcher. Supposed to have stuck more pigs than any man in Europe! A more ferocious old shark doesn't breathe!

WIGG. Well, but after all, I'm only a trespasser; that's all.

LOMAX. Only a trespasser! Unhappy man, that's enough; more than enough!

WIGG. He can only tell me to walk out again.

LOMAX. I beg your pardon. He goes a much shorter way to work than that. If he finds you here, the chances are you'll find yourself in jail ten minutes after, or else sewn up in a sack and chucked into the river!

WIGG. Go along!

LOMAX. That's what I'd advise you to do. How did you get here—over the wall?

WIGG. No; by the river.

LOMAX. Then you swam here?

WIGG. Not I! Do I look like a man who could swim from Westminster Bridge with a couple of hampers on his back?

LOMAX. Well, that's the way you'll have to go back.

WIGG. Not I. I've got a boat.

LOMAX. Have you. (*Running up.*) I don't see it.

WIGG. Not see it. (*Runs up stage.*) It's gone, and with all the provisions on board! What will Maria say! Look here, captain—if you happen to

know this ferocious old pork-butcher, just put it to him whether it isn't enough for a fellow to lose all his victuals—as fine a leg of mutton as ever was cooked—besides barcelonas and bulls'-eyes —

LOMAX. Makes no difference to the relentless Silverside—but what made you land here?

WIGG. Maria's signal—a red handkerchief tied to a bush.

LOMAX (*staggered*). What? Why, you confounded idiot, that was a signal for me not to land here.

[*Walks to and fro, and kicks the knives and forks about.*]

WIGG. By Jove!—here comes William out of the house, and somebody with him. Looks like a pork-butcher all over.

LOMAX. I wouldn't be seen for the world.

WIGG. What's to be done?

LOMAX. Put yourself out of sight somewhere. Climb up that tree —

WIGG. But what about the knives and forks?

LOMAX (*pushing him up*). Bother the knives and forks —

WIGG. And the mustard-pot. Oh, save that mustard-pot, captain, if you love me! It was Maria's wedding present (*tries to climb up tree—slides down again*). I shall never do it, captain, unless you give me a hoist. (LOMAX *helps him up the tree and is going off*.) (*Calling to him*.) I say, captain —

LOMAX (*stopping*). Well?

WIGG. If you happen to see Maria —

LOMAX. Hang Maria!

[*Runs behind greenhouse, R.U.E.*]

Enter SILVERSIDE and JOHN PLUMP at R., the former carrying a garden-rake, the latter a pitchfork.

SIL. (*looking about*). He's not here! We've missed the vagabond!

JOHN (*hooking up the table cloth with his pitchfork*). Here's his crockery; so he can't be far off.

SIL. He can't have escaped by the river, because I cut his boat adrift. (WIGG *shakes his fist at SILVERSIDE*). But he may have given us the slip over that wall. Just run round and see, and when you come back, chuck all this rubbish into that hamper, and pitch it into the river. I'll go round the other way—we must catch the fellow between us. [*Exit L.; JOHN PLUMP goes out R.*]

LOMAX *re-appears from behind greenhouse*.

LOMAX. Well thought of—Jessie may have left a note for me. (*Runs to landing stage and lifts up brick*.) Yes, this may explain. (*Hurriedly reading*.) "Do not land to-day. Uncle is at home expecting a new gardener." Here's a pleasant predicament—my boat won't be back for some time, and —

WIGG (*from tree*). Can I come down, captain? My perch ain't over and above comfortable.

LOMAX. Yes—no—stop a bit. If I could only contrive to send a note to Jessie to explain my presence here—but how? I have it. (*Running to tree*.) Come down! (*Helping Wigg down from tree*.) What's your name?

WIGG. Wigg—with two g's.

LOMAX. Christian name?

WIGG. Hannibal—with a H.

LOMAX. Do you know anything of horticulture?

WIGG. Never even heard of him.

LOMAX. Listen. Old Silverside expects a new gardener here to-day; there are some old working clothes in the greenhouse; put yourself inside them at once, and say you're the man. You can wheel a barrow, I suppose!

WIGG. Not without hurting my shins awfully. But how shall I get off the premises?

LOMAX. Leave that to me. (*Runs into greenhouse and returns with a large red fustian waistcoat and a blue apron and wide-brimmed straw hat*.) There you are. Now off with your coat. (*Pulling away at WIGG's coat*).

WIGG. But what about Maria?

LOMAX. Confound Maria! Here! (*Throws coat into hamper; then helps WIGG on with the waistcoat; then snatches off WIGG's hat, which he also throws into hamper; then rumples WIGG's hair all over his eyes, and slams the straw hat on his head*.) That's better. Now for the rake. (*Putting a long rake into WIGG's hands*.) There you are. [*Going*].

WIGG. Stop a bit—what am I to do?

LOMAX. Anything you like. Run about with the garden-roller, or the wheelbarrow, or rake up the flower beds—I don't care. Zounds! here comes John Plump back! I must write Jessie's note in the greenhouse. [*Runs into greenhouse*].

WIGG. Well, if these are the usual pleasures attending picnics, all I can say is I've had enough of 'em. What the deuce am I to do with this infernal machine? (*Using the rake violently*.) Hello! here comes that fellow with the pitchfork. I'll steer clear of him at all events.

[*Seizes wheelbarrow, and runs once round the stage at the top of his speed, and out at L.*]

Enter JOHN PLUMP at R.

JOHN. I can't see nothing of him, so I'd better set about doing as master told me.

[*Begins picking up plates, knives, forks, etc., and flinging them into hamper*].

WIGG (*Running in again at L. with wheelbarrow*). Here's the other chap with the rake after me now. Yes. (*Looking off at L.*) Here he comes.

[*Starts off with wheelbarrow again, and not seeing PLUMP, runs into him behind, upsetting him backwards into wheelbarrow*].

JOHN (*Crawling out of barrow*). Holloa! Why don't you take care? Clumsy!

WIGG. Beg pardon, but—the barrow ran away, and I was trying to catch it.

JOHN. So I suppose you're the new gardener we've been expecting, eh?

LOMAX (*Looking out from greenhouse and prompting WIGG*). Say yes, you jackass!

WIGG (*to JOHN*). Yes, you jackass!

JOHN. Well, you're a cheeky one, you are! Oh, here comes master.

Enter SILVERSIDE at L.

SIL. (*to JOHN*). Well, John, did you catch the fellow?

JOHN. No, sir; not a sign of him.

SIL. (*seeing Wigg*). Then who's this singularly repulsive-looking individual?

JOHN. The new gardener, sir—and a rum 'un he is, too.

WIGG (*aside*). Hope to goodness William won't know me again.

[*Cocks the straw hat very much over his eyes, and about to run off with the wheelbarrow again*].

SIL. (*shouting*). Stop where you are. You can go, John, and have another look round the premises. [*Exit PLUMP at R.*] Holloa, what the devil is he at now. (*Seeing WIGG, who is running about and pretending to catch something with hat*.) What are you running about like that for?

WIGG. Trying to catch a waps, sir.

SIL. A what?

WIGG (*shouting*). A waps.

SIL. Come here. (WIGG advances, cocking his hat over his eyes as before.) Now then, listen to me.

WIGG. All right. (Sitting down on the barrow.)

SIL. Get up. I'll tell you what you'll have to do if I engage you. You must know something of fishing, gardening, waiting at table; attend to a horse and trap; cleaning the plate, knives, forks, windows; run errands—

WIGG. Quite sure that's all, sir?

SIL. All I can think of just now. I pay good wages, with plenty to eat and drink. As to the kitchen-garden, the only thing I am particular about is celery. Raise my celery well, and I'll raise your salary. Ha, ha! that's a joke; you may laugh at that. [Poking Wigg in the side.]

WIGG. I may as well humour him. (Laughing outrageously.) Ha! ha! ha!

[Giving SILVERSIDE a prodigious poke in the ribs.]

SIL. That'll do. By-the-by, you've got some decent clothes to wait at table in, I suppose?

WIGG. Lots of 'em, sir.

SIL. And handy?

WIGG. Quite handy. You know the Elephant and Castle?

SIL. Pshaw!

[Hurries out at R.]

LOMAX (appears from behind greenhouse, watches SILVERSIDE off, then runs forward). Bravo, Wigg; you've got out of that first-rate.

WIGG. Ecod! It strikes me I've got into it!

LOMAX. Nonsense. Now, Wigg, my boy, when you go up to the house, if you'll find out a certain young lady, Miss Jessie Lupton, and give her this letter, I'll undertake to take you off safe and sound in a wherry.

WIGG. Me? Maria? and the little Wiggees?

LOMAX. The whole lot.

WIGG. Then I'll risk it. Give me the letter. (Takes letter from LOMAX; then suddenly.) Stop, though! Suppose old Silverside asks me for my character?

LOMAX. Then write one for yourself. I always carry writing materials about me. (Producing small inkstand and pen, and tearing a leaf out of pocket-book.) There you are. (Giving them.) You can say you have lived in the highest of families.

WIGG. Suppose I say the largest of families; a man blessed with a dozen kids may say that. (Writing and returning materials to LOMAX.) There!

LOMAX. Now be off.

WIGG. All right.

[Seizes wheelbarrow, broom and rake, and runs off at R.]

LOMAX. So far so well. Now to make myself scarce somewhere in the grounds till I see Jessie coming in answer to my letter. [Exit at L.]

Enter JESSIE at R., with an open letter in her hand.

JESSIE. What a strange thing this new gardener of uncle's is! He just tapped me, quite familiarly, too, on the shoulder and gave me this. (Reading paper.) "This is to certify that the bearer of this is a respectable ratepayer, and has lived in the largest of families." Very interesting, no doubt; but why should he give it to me?

Re-enter LOMAX at L.

LOMAX (running to her). Jessie!

JESSIE (astonished). Jack! You here!

LOMAX. It seems to surprise you. Haven't you received my note?

JESSIE. What note?

LOMAX. The one I sent you, telling you the fix I was in in consequence of some one having removed your signal that I was not to land.

JESSIE. To whom did you give it?

LOMAX. To the new gardener, or rather the new gardener of my own manufacture—an unfortunate Cockney who mistook Silverside Villa for the Britannia Tea Gardens. To save him from the consequences of his trespass, I put him into some old clothes I found in the greenhouse, intending to smuggle him away before any mischief came of it.

JESSIE. I'm terribly afraid mischief has come of it. Read this. (Giving note to LOMAX.)

LOMAX (reading). What's this? Double distilled idiot! Dolt! (Crushing note.) Then the chances are he has given my letter to your uncle.

JESSIE. Oh, Jack, that would be dreadful!

LOMAX. Run back to the house at once; he may not have delivered it yet.

JESSIE. And be sure you keep out of uncle's sight at all hazards. [Runs out at R.]

LOMAX. Here's a pretty state of affairs! The next time I see you, Wigg, look out for a wiggling, Wigg. (Savagely, then looking off towards L., near landing stage.) Holloa! here comes another boat-load. Old Silverside's in luck to-day.

MRS. WIGG (heard outside at L.). Stop here, watermen. This must be the place. I see something on the lawn that looks uncommonly like one of our hampers.

LOMAX. By Jove! What if this should be Mrs. Wigg and the little Wiggs. I'd better prevent her from landing. Too late!

MRS. WIGG enters L., as if from landing-stage, and calling to LOMAX, who is going off R.

MRS. W. Here! Hi! Stop, young man—

LOMAX. Very sorry—back again presently.

[Goes out R.]

MRS. W. Not particularly polite. (Examining hamper.) Yes, it is our hamper, sure enough. What's this! Plates, dishes, knives and forks, Hannibal's coat and hat, all thrown in together, higgledy-piggledy! and no sign of Hannibal himself. Eh! (Looking off at R.) Can it be? Yes; here he comes, and dressed up in somebody else's clothes. What can it all mean? I'll just keep my eye on him. [Retires.]

Enter WIGG at R. in an ill-fitting, long-tailed coat and ample white cravat. He carries a tray, on which is a decanter, biscuits, etc. etc. He is slightly elevated.

WIGG. This is an agreeable variety, this is! The duties of head waiter combined with those of a barrow-wheeler—I mean a wheel-barrower! I'd no sooner given the note to the lovely damsel with the golden locks—

MRS. W. (overhearing). Lovely damsel! Golden locks!

WIGG. Than they lugged me into the house, inserted me into these singularly ill-fitting garments, poked this tray into my hands, and told me to follow the "lovely damsel" into the grounds with it. I wonder where she is. Ecod, if Maria could only see me, she'd say I was following a gal about.

[Goes out at L.]

MRS. WIGG. Following a gal about! Oh, the villain. But I'll see what his little game is.

[Following WIGG]

Crash heard at R. Enter SILVERSIDE, limping and rubbing his leg.

SIL. Dence take the clumsy, thickheaded idiot! Left his infernal barrow right across the doortop. It's a wonder I didn't break my neck. Holloa!

Here he comes. What the deuce is the matter with him?
[Retires.]

Enter WIGG at R., occasionally staggering and almost upsetting tray.

WIGG. Steady, boys, steady. Can't find the "lovely damsel" anywhere. (*Slamming tray down on table with a loud crash.*) I think I am fairly entitled to another glass of sherry. I've only had eight. (*Pouring out wine.*)

SIL. Confound him, he's helping himself to the sherry! (*Coming forward and striking a dignified attitude.*) So, sir!

WIGG. Ah, Silverdale, my old boy. (*Drinking.*) I looks towards you.

SIL. How dare you help yourself to my sherry, sir?

WIGG. That's enough. The moment you object, I won't touch another drop.

SIL. (*holding decanter upside down.*) I should think not. So, sir, this is the way you do your work, is it?

WIGG. If you're not satisfied, do it yourself. There's the roller. (*Pointing to a heavy garden roller.*) You can run up and down the grounds with it as long as you like, while I sit here and look on.

SIL. Harkee, sirrah. Did you bring a character with you?

WIGG. Of course I did. I know it's a first-rate one, 'cause I wrote it myself.

SIL. You did, did you? I should like to see it. (*Aside.*) I'll have him up for getting a situation under false pretences.

WIGG (*who has been searching his pockets.*) Here it is. [*Giving a slip of paper to SILVERSIDE.*]

SIL. What's this (*Reading.*) "Thirteen pair of socks, two dozen——"

WIGG. That's last week's washing; here's the correct card. (*Giving LOMAX's note to SILVERSIDE.*)

SIL. (*opening note.*) What's this? (*Reading to himself.*) "My own beloved Jessie—landed here in mistake—in a regular fix—help me, if you love me." (*Staring at WIGG in bewilderment.*) And you wrote this letter yourself?

WIGG. Every word of it, my Trojan.

SIL. And do you mean to say that your "beloved Jessie," as you call her, returns your affection?

WIGG. Jessie! Who's she? You mean Maria?

SIL. (*shouting.*) Jessie!

WIGG (*shouting still louder.*) Maria.

SIL. Do you mean to tell me she returns your affection?

WIGG. Of course she does, or she wouldn't have made me the happy father of a dozen young 'uns.

SIL. (*screaming.*) What's that? So you're not a gardener, after all. Then come out of those clothes.

WIGG. All right. Take your bobtail, take your waistcoat, take your choker.

[*Taking things off and throwing them in SILVERSIDE's face, then pulling his own coat, hat, etc., out of hamper, all smashed and covered with mustard, etc., and pulling them on.*]

SIL. (*recognising him.*) Eh! yes! It's the very ruffian who landed here an hour ago. (*Shouting with all his might.*) John Plump, look alive with your pitchfork, and bring me the carving-knife.

MRS. WIGG appears at R., and overhears the last speech.

MRS. W. (*screaming.*) A carving-knife! I can't see him murdered. (*Rushing down.*) Hannibal, dear.

WIGG. Maria, you're just in time. Put your majestic person between me and that old lunatic. I

don't want to hurt him. (*Getting behind Mrs. WIGG.*) Now, sir, touch me if you dare!

[*Squaring at SILVERSIDE.*]

MRS. W. (*threatening SILVERSIDE with her umbrella.*) Yes, touch him if you dare! How dare you threaten my husband with a carving-knife, you sanguinary old man?

SIL. Your husband! Then how dare he write love-letters to my niece?

MRS. W. Oh, Hannibal! You hear what this hoary-headed individual says? Can it be true?

WIGG. Not a word of it.

Here LOMAX and JESSIE enter at R.

LOMAX. I see it's time for me to interfere.

WIGG (*seeing LOMAX.*) Ah, here's the captain of the penny steamboat. (*Running to LOMAX and dragging him down.*) He'll explain everything.

SIL. LOMAX! (*Then seeing JESSIE.*) Jessie!

JESSIE. Yes, uncle. But what is the meaning of this strange scene?

SIL. It means, for one thing, that your admirer, Mr. Lomax, has quitted H.M.'s service for that of the Penny Steamboats (*smilingly*).

WIGG (*patting LOMAX on the back.*) Never mind his chaff, my gallant captain.

LOMAX. Not exactly, my dear sir. In a word, I am the writer of that letter to your charming niece. (*Pointing to letter which SILVERSIDE holds.*) This gentleman (*pointing to WIGG*) is innocent.

WIGG. You hear, Maria! He says I'm a gentleman.

MRS. W. He says you're innocent—that's all I care about.

SIL. (*to JESSIE.*) Then this lady's husband is not the person you adore, eh?

JESSIE (*smilingly*). I wouldn't deprive her of such a treasure for the world.

MRS. W. I hope you'll get half as good a one, young woman.

SIL. Well, young man, I'll think the matter over; perhaps I may say yes.

JESSIE (*taking his arm, and coaxingly*). Suppose you say "Yes" first, and think the matter over afterwards.

SIL. Take her, Lomax. (*To WIGG.*) As for you, sir, think yourself lucky in escaping so well.

WIGG. Remarkably well. Just look at my coat; looks more like a mustard plaster.

MRS. W. But, Hannibal, dear; where's the hamper with the provisions?

WIGG. Well, I can't say for certain, but I shouldn't be surprised if the "boy" at the Nore wasn't pitching into them by this time.

MRS. W. Mercy on us, we shall be starved; young 'uns and all.

SIL. Nay. (*To WIGG.*) As you're only half to blame, after all, stop where you are and make a day of it—young 'uns and all.

WIGG. Thank you, old 'un. But listen to me, Maria; the next time you have a "water party," I insist on a van; no more of the "Jolly Young Waterman" business for me.

SIL. All I can say, Mrs. Wigg, is that if you and yours should honour me with a second visit, I hope——

WIGG. So do I—that the result may be an equally happy termination to "Mrs. WIGG'S WATER-PARTY."

CURTAIN.



A DEED OF SEPARATION

By Theodore TRIPPLIN

IT was a silly little tiff, but it separated them on their wedding-day. Two hours before they had been bachelor and spinster—John Ross and Helen Pearse. At twelve o'clock the two names became merged into one, and the result—Mr. and Mrs. John Ross.

They left the church arm-in-arm. They walked along, he looking at her, she looking at the bonnet shops. Then said John: "Our train starts at eight, darling. What shall we do till then?"

Helen glanced longingly at the "dreams" in satin and straw that she was being dragged relentlessly by. She thought that the best way of passing the time would be to enter one of these bowers of delight and "try on." She had been obliged to forego one of the greatest pleasures which marriage brings with it—purchasing her trousseau; for she had changed her condition without the knowledge of her papa and mamma, and had been coaxed into precipitation by the alluring bait of being "rigged out" in Paris.

Mrs. Ross, with the heroic determination to sacrifice herself on the altar of love, said meekly:

"Whatever you like, John dear."

This dutiful reply drew forth a similar leaning towards self-immolation on the part of the husband.

"I like what you like, ducky," said he. "Suppose we go to the British Museum?"

But Helen's thoughts were far away—at least, as far as the distance lay between themselves and a "sweet thing" in Madame Tréscher's window. "It would go beautifully with

my green dress. I wonder how much money John has with him," she said to herself. Then she began artfully:

"Do you know, John, I haven't an idea what is your taste in dress—whether you like bright or sober colours. Now, just look at that hat—the pink one; do you like it? I couldn't wear it—my complexion isn't good enough; but —"

"You couldn't wear it! Why, it's not half pretty enough for you! Wait till we get to Paris, then you will see what my taste is; though, as for that, I like you in anything—in a rag."

"Oh, John; you have never seen me in a rag!"

"No, of course not, darling. I only



THEY WALKED ALONG.

meant you can't 'paint the lily,' and that sort of thing. But come, we're wasting time. What shall we do?"

"Wasting time!" Men were really too aggravating! John *would* not see; and she had even gone so far as to disparage her own complexion!

"I don't care," she said.

"Why not go to the theatre? There are several *matinées* on. It's a quarter past two; we've time for the Savoy; it begins at three."

Helen clapped her hands. "Oh, a theatre!—I should love it; but not the Savoy. I could go there before I was married. I want to enjoy myself now. Oh, I know what I want to see: 'The Whitewashed Sepulchre,' at the Royalty; it's delightfully naughty, I read."

"Naughty? I should think it is. It won't do for you. No, no; we will go to the Savoy."

Helen's voice grew a trifle cross.

"I hate the Savoy! Really, I didn't think you were so narrow-minded. I'm a married woman, and I ought to be allowed to see everything now, and I intend to see this."

"My dear, I'm the best judge of what you should see or not, so let us say no more about it. This play is full of new fangled ideas—calls itself 'realistic.' Such realities you don't want to know anything about."

Helen's hand slipped out of John's arm.

"Don't be a cross old bear. I am determined to go to this play."

"Determined! I shall not allow it."

"There's no question of 'allowing.' I think you are most cruel. You think because we are married in this underhand way I am going to be bullied. You need not go, if you are so particular. I shall go alone."

"What, to-day?—separate on our wed-

ding-day? and all because of a stupid play; and you said you were willing to do what I liked."

"Really—surely you don't expect me to do always as you like? Oh, the selfishness of man! Here have I been dragging along these streets all for your gratification."

"For my gratification, when we've been staring at bonnet shops all the time? But there, women never are reasonable: they accept all the sacrifice, and don't even see it."

"Sacrifice! you contradict my every wish."

"I like that. What wish have you expressed that I have not hastened to gratify, you ungrateful girl?"

"You need say no more. I see you are sorry you married me. We had better part. Good-bye."

Before John Ross could recover from the shock of this proposal, Helen had darted across the road and hailed a 'bus. John saw her being carried away before his eyes. The separation was effected; the blue 'bus had swallowed up his wife and confirmed the deed as effectually as a Court of Law could have done. But Helen,

seated in her 'bus, asked herself what was to be her next step. The question that first worried her was: What was she to do when she got out of the 'bus? But ere another minute had passed, a more embarrassing problem claimed her attention: How to get out of the 'bus without paying? For, in the tacit acknowledgment of her dependence as a married woman, Helen had locked up her purse in her trunk. She looked out of the window. Where was John? Would he put a climax to his disgraceful behaviour by following the 'bus? Her heart sank as she peered anxiously among the crowd



"I SHALL GO ALONE."

for a sight of her lately-loved husband. The conductor was beginning, at the other end of the 'bus, to collect the fares. Oh, if only John would come! She thought no more of "The White-washed Sepulchre"; she felt ready for a sepulchre herself. There was nothing left for her but to drown herself. Wretch! he had not even taken the trouble to follow her!

The 'bus stopped. Some-



"HOW DARED HE PURSUE HER."

one came in—
someone sat
down beside
her. How
dared he pur-
sue her! Helen
rose to leave
the vehicle:
the conductor
stopped her.
"Fare, miss."
She felt for her
pocket; then
she heard some-
one say,
"Two."

Helen alight-
ed; someone was
beside her;
someone said,
"Take my
arm, dear."

Mrs. Ross
took someone's
arm.

The separa-
tion had lasted
just five mi-
nutes.

Whispers from the Woman's World.

By FLORENCE MARY GARDINER.

THE EVOLUTION OF FASHION.

PART VIII. MOURNING (*continued*).

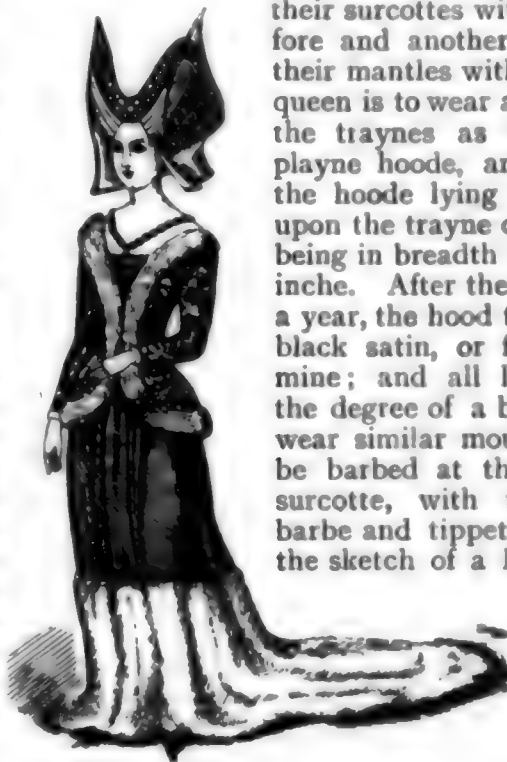
IN the Middle Ages black was used for mourning as a rule, though purple and brown were occasionally substituted. Chaucer, in "The Knight's Tale," speaks of "clothes *black* all dropped with tears," and, again, of "widdowes habit of samite *brown*." In many cases, on the death of her husband, the wife retired for a year to a convent, when she assumed the nun's dress, of which the widow's weeds of the present day are a symbol. The mourning adopted by Katherine of Valois, wife of Henry V., the hero of Agincourt, who died at Vincennes in 1422, may be regarded as the typical widow's dress of that period. It consisted of a black brocade cote hardi, edged with white fur, and further embellished with black glass beads, which were also used for ornamenting the winged head dress. Her black woollen gown has a deep bordering of white fur. Some mourning habits of this period are represented in a splendid manuscript "Liber Regalis," still preserved in Westminster Abbey. They are composed of black fabrics in the prevailing fashion, and are furred with ermine. Froissart relates that the Earl of Foix, on hearing of the death of his son, Gaston, sent for his barber and was close shaved, and clothed himself and his household in black. At the funeral of the Earl of Flanders, all the nobles and others present were attired in black gowns; and on the death of John, King of France, the King of Cyprus clothed himself in black mourning.

At the end of the fifteenth century it was considered neces-

sary in England to pass sumptuary mourning laws, owing to the extravagance of the nobility in the superfluous usage of cloth and other items at funerals. Habits and liveries were limited to certain quantities. Planché tells us dukes and marquises were allowed sixteen yards for their gowns, sloppes (or mourning cassocks) and mantles; an earl fourteen; a viscount twelve; a baron eight; a knight six; and all inferior persons two yards only; but an archbishop had the same privilege as a duke. Hoods were only permitted to those above the degree of esquire of the king's household.

Margaret, Countess of Richmond, the mother of King Henry VII., issued, in the eighth year of his reign, an ordinance for "the reformation of apparell for great estates of women in the tyme of mourninge." "They shall have their surcottes with a trayne before and another behynde, and their mantles with traynes. The queen is to wear a surcotte, with the traynes as aforesaid, and playne hoode, and a tippet at the hoode lying a good length upon the trayne of the mantell, being in breadth a nayle and an inch. After the first quarter of a year, the hood to be lined with black satin, or furred with ermine; and all ladies down to the degree of a baroness are to wear similar mourninge, and to be barbed at the chin." The surcotte, with trayne, hoode, barbe and tippet, are visible in the sketch of a lady of the sixteenth century,

taken from Pietro Vercellio's famous work on costume. The gentleman's mourning of



WIDOW'S DRESS OF QUEEN KATHERINE DE VALOIS IN THE YEAR 1422.



COSTUMES WORN BY KING PHILIP II. OF SPAIN AND HIS ATTENDANTS AT THE FUNERAL PROCESSION OF HIS FATHER.

black cloth and fur is reproduced from a contemporary MS.

Among the obsolete funeral customs, may be mentioned the Death Crier, the lying-in-state of all classes and the waxen effigies of those of royal rank. Before newspapers published obituary notices, it was customary for the Death Crier, armed with a bell and attired in a black livery, painted or embroidered with skulls and cross bones, to announce to the townspeople and inhabitants of surrounding villages that another had gone over to the majority. This functionary was in the employ of the Corporation or civil authorities, and on the death of a member of the Royal Family he was usually ac-

companied by the Guild of Holy Souls, who walked in procession, bearing lighted tapers and other religious emblems. Lying-in-state usually lasted for three days, by which time the arrangements for a simple interment were completed, and the body was placed reverently in the ground. The obsequies of kings and queens, however, were carried over a protracted period, consequently a waxen figure was prepared, which was dressed in regal robes, and substituted for the body as soon as decomposition set in. This fashion was in vogue till the time of William and Mary, and in Westminster Abbey there is a collection of waxen effigies, which may be viewed by permission of the Dean. As likenesses, they are interesting and they are also useful as costume studies.



GENTLEMAN'S MOURNING—TIME OF HENRY VII.



FRENCH LADY OF 16TH CENTURY IN WIDOW'S WEEDS.

Of late years, in this country, mourning has been considerably modified, particularly for the male sex, who often content themselves with a black hat-band and another on the left sleeve of dark coloured clothes. By Scotch law, whether a man dies solvent or insolvent, his widow may claim out of his estate sufficient for mourning suitable to her rank, and the same privilege applies to each of her children who are old enough to be present at their father's funeral. This right is preferable to any debts the dead man may have contracted, and is a distinction not accorded to English, Welsh or Irish widows.

In most European countries black is the accepted colour for mourning; though in different parts of the globe white, yellow, red, brown, and even blue garments are prescribed by custom as the emblem of death.

These shades have been selected for the following reasons. Black is symbolical of



GERMAN WIDOW'S DRESS OF TO-DAY.

the gloom which surrounds one when those who are nearest and dearest are taken. Black and white express sorrow mixed with hope, and white alone the light which follows the night of mourning. Blue, the tint of the heavens, to which it is hoped the spirit forms have taken flight. Yellow is typical of the dead autumn leaf, and brown the earth to which the body returns. Violet, a royal colour, is generally used for the mourning of kings and high dignitaries of the Church. Scarlet is also used for royal mourning occasionally.*

FASHIONS AND FRIPPERIES.

The fashions this season are more remarkable for grotesqueness than beauty.

* For permission to reproduce some of the drawings from Davey's "History of Mourning," I am indebted to Messrs. Jay, Regent Street, London.



THE DEATH CRIER.



ENGLISH WIDOW'S DRESS OF TO-DAY.

The ever-widening skirts and enormous sleeves are not counterbalanced by the head-gear, which is of only moderate proportion; consequently, the *tout ensemble* suggests a want of grace most offensive to the artistic eye.

Short capes of velvet and coloured cloth have been very popular for outdoor wear, but, as the season advanced, were superseded by long mantles of velvet, plush and satin, falling in loose folds from yokes covered with passementerie. Bishop and pleated sleeves slope from the shoulders, and the entire garment is generally lined with softly quilted satin or with rich brocade, and edged with fur. It would be difficult to conceive anything more suitable for carriage wear; but for walking, a jacket of a lighter character will appeal to the majority of people, who like to take pedestrian exercise unencumbered by weighty wraps. This light-fitting jacket of fawn cloth is well adapted for such a purpose, and is a most convenient adjunct to one's wardrobe. In opera mantles there are two distinct styles. Short capes with deep frills and Medici collars, for which a variety of materials of delicate tints are used, and long cloaks reaching to the edge of the skirt, composed of bengaline cloth, silk or brocade, and trimmed with ostrich feathers, to correspond, or some contrasting fur. I recently saw one of the latter of creamy white satin, bearing a mediæval design in gold thread. It was lined throughout with plain satin, and round the neck and down the front was a handsome trimming of

slightly-curved fur of the same shade as the fabric. Such cloaks have the advantage of harmonising with different toilets, and, though they may appear expensive, in the long run prove a positive economy. I have also given our readers a sketch of a charming evening gown, in pearl grey *merveilleuse*, outlined with steel embroidery. A softness is given to sleeves and corsage by the introduction of puffs and folds of *mousseline de soie*, and the skirt is embellished in a similar manner.

Hats are so universally becoming, and, moreover, so economical, compared with bonnets, that one sees at least half a dozen of the former to one of the latter. Women who have arrived at the fair, fat and forty period do not hesitate to adopt the very picturesque head-gear, richly plumed,* now offered, which shades, without concealing, the counten-

ance, and takes ten years at least from the average woman's age. A very striking instance illustrative of this fact came before my notice the other day. A lady, who is decidedly *passée*, and who is verging on her thirty-eighth year, has for a considerable time adopted for her own use a small bonnet, which she considered appropriate to her age, and in a style which can best be described as neat, not gaudy. Happily for herself and others, she was persuaded to buy this winter a black velvet hat, whose sloping brim is surrounded by a soft edging of curled ostrich feathers. A bandeau of brightly-tinted *miroir* velvet rests upon her still luxuriant hair, and the trimming consists of ostrich plumes and aigrette, held in place by jewelled pins and rosettes of velvet. The change was magical, and she for the first time realised how much she



FASHIONABLE MILLINERY



AN EVENING GOWN.

had missed when all her acquaintances greeted her with compliments on her improved appearance. So take this hint, dear readers, and rest assured you will be conferring a benefit on yourself and others. Our illustrations of felt and velvet hats will give a good idea of the latest modes, and will prove excellent models for those who are unable to indulge in expensive French millinery, but who, nevertheless, desire to choose what is most becoming, and to appear at all times and seasons to the best advantage.

* * *

Year by year it is prognosticated that Christmas cards have had their day, yet each season more ingenuity is displayed in their production, and more artistic results are obtained. Those which emanate from that favourite firm, Raphael Tuck and Sons, always outdistance the designs of other competitors, and their latest novelties are perfect works of art. To supply the home and foreign trade, it has been found necessary to employ a double staff, working in turn night and day, who are busily preparing these friendly mementoes in more than a dozen different languages. It is often asked

what shall be done with the accumulations collected in different households, and which are annually increased till they assume enormous proportions. Large packets sent to workhouses, hospitals, children's convalescent homes and similar institutions are heartily welcomed, and serve to brighten the lives of those who are sometimes inclined to think that Fate has forgotten them. In every town, too, there are almshouses; and, by the expenditure of a little time and trouble the names of the inmates can be ascertained; and by directing a card to each person, the little gift assumes an individuality which is always acceptable. Or a number of cards can be pasted in a stout linen scrap-book or album, which considerably enhances the value of the present.

* * *

The near approach of Christmas recalls the origin of some of the quaint and curious customs associated with the festive season. Christmas Day, the Festival of the Nativity, was in ancient times kept by different churches in April, May or December, but the 25th of the latter month is now chosen by all Christian denominations for the celebration of this feast. Some of the observances in connection with this season are traceable to the Roman Saturnalia, or Festival of



A TIGHT FITTING JACKET.

Saturn, combined with others which have been handed down to us from our Saxon and Scandinavian ancestors. This has resulted in a queer mixture of Christian and pagan ceremonies and superstitions. Decking our houses and churches with evergreens, for example, is a survival of the sun worship of the Druids, who, at the winter solstice, sallied forth with great pomp to gather the mystic mistletoe. This was cut with a golden sickle from the oak, to which it often clings as a parasite, and portions were sent to temples and favoured chiefs, who joyfully received it, believing it to possess the property of expelling sickness and enchantments from the dwelling before which it was hung.

We find from Virgil's allusions, when comparing the golden bough in "Infernus," to the mistletoe, that the use of this plant was not unknown to the ancient Greeks, of whose poets he was the acknowledged imitator; and Dr. Chandler tells us, in his travels in Greece, that where Druidism prevailed the houses were decked with evergreens in December, that the sylvan spirits might repair to them and remain unrippd with frost and cold winds, until a milder season had renewed the foliage of their accustomed haunts. Stowe, also, in his Survey of London, states: "Against the feast of Christmas Day every man's house, as also their parish churches, was decked with holme, ivy, bayes and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green. The conduits and standards in the streets, were likewise garnished. I read that in the year 1444, by tempest of thunder and lightning, towards the morning of Christmas Day, at the Leadenhall, on the Cornhill, a standard of tree being set up in the midst of the pavement, fast in the ground, nailed full of holme and ivy, for disport of Christmas to the people, was torne up and cast down by a malignant spirit (as was thought), and the stones were cast into the streets, and into divers houses, so that the people were sore aghast at the great tempest."

The burning of the Yule log, was a ceremony performed by the Scandinavians at the feast of Jull, when huge bonfires were lighted in honour of their god, Thor. Formerly it was our custom to have a Yule, or Christmas candle, of enormous size to illuminate the festive board on Christmas Day, and this shed its light on the party assembled at the burning of the Yule log.

The English were also remarkable among European nations for the manner in which they spent this festival, and admitted various sports and pastimes seldom practised in other countries. In the King's Court, wherever he chanced to reside, there was appointed a Lord of Misrule, or master of merry sports, who made his appearance at the house of every nobleman and person of distinction. Among others, the Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs, the various Inns of Court, and the Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, appointed this officer annually. He began his reign on All Hallows Eve and was in power till the day after the Feast of the Purification. During this period masks and mummeries prevailed; and certain games, such as cards, dice and tables (which were prohibited by law at other times), were permitted during the Christmas season. In the middle ages, mummings, from the Danish word *mumme* (*to disguise*), were indulged in by rich and poor alike, and those persons who could not afford masks, painted their faces, or rubbed them over with soot.

In each of the cathedral churches there was a "Bishop or Archbishop of Fools" elected; and in those churches which were immediately depending on the Papal See, a "Pope of Fools." These mock pontiffs and their trains assisted at divine service, attired in absurd dresses, resembling pantomime players and buffoons; some sang indecent songs in the choir, while the others ate, drank or played dice on the altar, while the priest celebrated mass. The Puritans, who objected to forms and ceremonies, used their best endeavours to do away with those in connection with Christmas, and in a letter written from a citizen of Canterbury, to his friend in London in 1648, this matter is referred to: "Upon Wednesday, Dec. 22nd, 1647, the cryer of Canterbury by the appointment of the Master Mayor, openly proclaimed that Christmas Day should be put downe, and that a market should be kept on that day."

Among the single sheets in the British Museum is an Order of Parliament, dated December. 1652, directing "That no observation shall be had of the five-and-twentieth day of December, commonly called Christmas Day, nor any solemnity used or exercised in churches upon that day in respect thereof."

The waits, or carol singers, were the minstrels and watchmen attached to the King's Court, or appointed by the municipal authorities. These paraded the streets at night, to prevent robberies, sounded the watch, and were employed in various ways for the benefit of the citizens. The degenerate descendants of these ancient musicians, who now make the solemn hours of night hideous by their presence for a few weeks before Christmas, generally terminate their labours on the eve of that festival. Down to 1820 in London they had a certain degree of official recognition. In the City the post was purchased, and at Westminster it was an appointment under the control of the High Constable and the Court of Burgesses. A writer in *Notes and Queries* draws attention to the analogy between the words "waits" and "waith"; the latter in Scotland means wandering, or roaming from place to place. Such wanderers were the minstrels who, three centuries ago, were under the patronage of the Corporation of Glasgow, and were provided by the City with a uniform. A remnant of this custom still exists in the magistrates annually granting a certificate to a few blind men of good character who play principally Scotch airs during the last few nights of the year.

The Christmas tree, though long used in Germany, was not introduced into England till after the Queen's marriage to the Prince Consort. It is undoubtedly traceable to the Romans, as the Christmas tree of to-day is but the counterpart of the pine-tree hung with little images of Bacchus—supposed to protect the vines and secure fertility—which were at this season, two thousand years ago, distributed to the children, just as modern toys are now.

With regard to Christmas fare, perhaps to the mince pie should be given the place of distinction. This delectable dainty was originally oval in shape, thus calling to mind the manger which formed the cradle of our Saviour; while its contents consisting of the choicest productions of the East, were symbolical of the offerings made by "the wise men who came from afar to worship, bringing spices," etc. Yule-dough was a paste baby, presented by bakers at this season to their customers. I find in the ancient records of the Catholic Church, at Rome, on the Vigil of the Nativity, sweetmeats were offered to the

Fathers in the Vatican and that all kinds of little images (no doubt of paste) were to be found in the confectioners' shops. In an old tract treating of Christmas entertainments, we read: "An English gentleman, at the opening of the great day, in the morning, had all his tenants and neighbours in the hall at daybreak. The strong beer was broached and the black jacks (scullions) went plentifully about with toast, sugar, nutmeg and good Cheshire cheese. The Hackin, or great sausage, must be ready boiled by daybreak or else two young men must take the cook by the arms and run her round the market-place, till she is ashamed of her laziness." Other noted dishes associated with this season are boar's head, sirloin of beef, capons, turkeys, geese, ducks, goose and pork pies and those made of carp's tongues, plum porridge, a soup with raisins, plum bun—an indigestible compound peculiar to Scotland, plum pudding, the wassail bowl, etc. In former times it was usual to set a watch upon the pies and other Christmas fare the night before Christmas, and this is mentioned in an ancient lay:

"Come guard the Christmas pie,
That the thief, though ne'er so sly,
With his flesh hooks don't come nigh,
To catch it
From him, who all alone sits there,
Having his eyes still in his ear,
And a deal of nightly fear,
To watch it."

Christmas, at the present day, is shorn of many of its quaint and old time usages and is apt to be scoffed at by those past the meridian of life. Christmas is the time of all others for burying that hatchet which has such an uncomfortable propensity for rising to the surface, for welcoming home the prodigal with tenderness and for holding out the hand of good fellowship to those whose journey through life has been strewn with obstacles and stumbling-blocks. It is also, *par excellence*, the children's festival, and it is the pleasing duty of those merging towards the sere and yellow leaf to make Christmas to them a time of rejoicing and merriment, a dream of happiness, the remembrance of which no forthcoming sorrow can deprive them of.

"Hail, Father Christmas! hail to thee!
Honoured ever shalt thou be!
All the sweets that love bestows,
Endless pleasures wait on those
Who, like vassals brave and true,
Give to Christmas homage due."



INCIDENTS OF THE MONTH

SOCIAL, DRAMATIC,
MUSICAL Gossip

NOTIONS FROM AN EASY CHAIR.

By JOHN A. STEUART.

A MERRY Christmas, my masters! It seems but the other day that we were reveling in the festivities of the Christmas of 1893, and already the horologe

of time is warning us to brace ourselves for those of 1894. *Tempus fugit*: the reflection is an ancient one. The fleetingness of life has long been a familiar theme with the doleful moralist. No doubt it occupied the thoughts of Methuselah, and probably it was one of the earliest notions that occurred to Adam after his expulsion from that place of bliss, which we, alas! know only by tradition. Many poets have made funereal verses about it since, and profound philosophers have devoted gigantic and gloomy intellects to it; yet *Tempus fugit*; and we must e'en make shift to put up with the fact. No use crying over spilt milk or milk that destiny intends to spill. Rather let us cheerfully accept the inevitable, and extract such comfort and merriment from it as we may. On the whole, mankind displays no little ingenuity in its modes of enjoyment. As regards Christmas, I am afraid we are departing somewhat from the original intention. There is historical authority for believing that Christmas was primarily instituted as a religious festival. But mark the progress of the world! Some antiquated folks still go to church on the 25th of December; but to the smiling majority Christmas means an extra dose of roast

beef and plum pudding, pantomimes and general jollification, rather than prayer and praise. Let it be conceded at once, however, that there is much worse philosophy, much worse religion than light-heartedness.

* * *

The flamboyant Frenchman chooses to insinuate that we take our pleasures sadly in this free and enlightened England. Perhaps we do; there may be a grain of truth in the scandalous insinuation. We are a composite people, but our governing trait, I understand, is a certain German stolidness. We are sometimes very grim; we are invariably very much in earnest. We eat and drink, as we do all else, with a stubborn perseverance that amazes our Gallic neighbours. Possibly we are inclined to overtax the digestive and biliary organs, and are saturnine in consequence. Jacques Bonhomme sips his liquor out of a glass no bigger than a tailor's thimble, and nibbles his meat as if afraid of it. John Bull takes huge libations and while dining gives his teeth active employment. At no time does he devote himself so zealously to creature comforts as at Christmas. The temptations are many and he yields to them with a rapturous gusto which more than aught else establishes his reputation for earnestness and purpose. I hope honest John—not the John who presides at the Irish Office, but his master, the Great John—will be able to mark the Christmas of 1894 as a red-letter day in his existence—that he will be happy beyond expression, and that though he may lack the boar's head and the foaming tankards of the good old times, the times of fabulous delights, he may still have solid entertainment in plenty. May he be able to say to himself without a touch

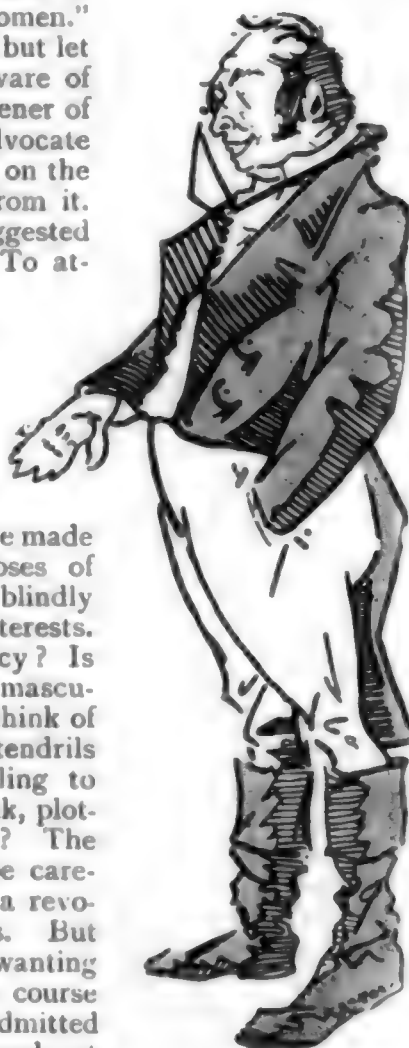
of insincerity: "Yes, by Jove! under such conditions as these, life is most decidedly worth living;" and, withal, that good digestion may wait on healthy appetite.

* * *

There is a club in the Metropolis yclept the Pioneer Club. The members are ladies of independent mind, and, beyond doubt, of the most distinguished abilities, and lately, in their capacity of reformers, they debated a momentous question: whether or not man should be any longer tolerated on this globe. The discussion was opened by the leader, however, with the daring and explosive statement that "the attitude of some advanced women towards men is calculated to injure the interests of women." This sounds promising, but let all men who read it beware of undue elation. The opener of the debate did not advocate any surrender of rights on the part of woman; far from it. On the contrary, she suggested a "little diplomacy." To attempt to take man roughly by the nose might lead to trouble; for the brute is stubborn, nay, at times, he is even vicious, but by deft wheedling and judicious flattery, the lady thought he could be made to subserve the purposes of advanced women and blindly destroy his own selfish interests. Is not this a pretty policy? Is it not enough to make masculine blood run cold to think of the fair ones, the soft tendrils that are thought to cling to him as the ivy to the oak, plotting away his freedom? The Pioneers will have to be careful, or they will bring a revolution about their ears. But happily there are not wanting signs of hope. In the course of argument it was admitted that the statements made at Women's Rights Convocations



MIGHT LEAD TO TROUBLE.



HONEST JOHN.

are often opposed to the real interests of women. This view was generally supported and the mind of the meeting was distinctly for diplomacy as against active hostility; provided, of course, that the diplomacy did not degenerate into weakness. Yet again it was remarked, not casually and as a matter of little importance, but deliberately and as it were of set purpose, that on the woman question the conservatism of men is appalling. It is hard for the male intelligence to grasp the meaning of this statement; are women chafing because men sometimes decline to marry, or because they do not take more than one wife a-piece, or simply because they are not pliant enough? I ask the question feelingly, for I am a man: what would the ladies have? Some of us remain single because we cannot afford to wed, some because we are afraid of the new woman; and none of us in this happy Christian country can legally take more than one spouse to his bosom. Men are conservative because conservatism is forced upon them. Some of us might be



ready to emigrate with half a regiment of beauties; but whither should we turn? Not to Utah, for in that erstwhile blissful land polygamy has been abolished, to the infinite sorrow of many elders; not to the wilds of Africa, for there the social conveniences are not all that could be desired. I make a suggestion—let the advanced woman turn Mohammedan, emigrate to Turkey, Arabia or Egypt and if she fails to find a lord, she must look at home for the fault.

* * *

But perhaps I am unjust to "Nature's noblest work," the lasses. The difficulty is in knowing what ladies want. We hear much about the emancipation of the sex, but the particular form of slavery from which they desire to be freed has not, so far as I know, been definitely stated. Is it the intention to do away with men altogether—to drive them to wholesale suicide by the various ways which the female mind can readily devise? or does woman simply wish to have man well under her thumb, to break his spirit and give him a taste of servitude? If she is to assume the dominant part, I presume she is prepared to face the trivial item of bread and butter, to provide for rent, rates and taxes, to clothe the subject being and see that he has pocket-money. If these are the conditions on which she desires to ascend the throne of the world, I know men who will not object, who will strive to bear up under the trials of shopping, visiting,

gossiping, drinking innumerable cups of tea, going to balls, routs, plays and the rest. But let her beware of attempting to seize the honours without the toils. I have her best interests at heart in warning her. This phase of the question has not, I think, been discussed by the enlightened Pioneers. I invite them to consider it fairly and seriously at their next meeting.

* * *

Curiously enough, a recent post brought me a letter from a correspondent, signing himself rather suggestively, "Nero," on this very matter of the advanced woman. "Nero" is a devoted reader of the LUDGATE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE, and he has the charming effrontery to affirm that what he most enjoys in it are "Notions from an Easy Chair," which, he adds, are not only illustrated with delightful humour, but show gleams of insight and common sense. Blushing deeply, I make my bow of acknowledgment to "Nero," assuring



him that the cockles of my heart are very warm indeed after perusing his compliments. But to his main point. "Nero" notices that it is my province "to discourse at large of things in general," and therefore he asks me to state my views on the advanced woman and the revolted daughter. I had no idea there was anyone among the readers of the LUDGATE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE who would deliberately plan my fall. What have I done to "Nero" that, under his smiling exterior, behind his inspiring flattery, he should cherish a grudge against me? State my views concerning the "new woman," indeed! I'd as soon think of jumping over Niagara. No, my dear, guileless "Nero," I have no desire to figure as a martyr; I don't want a regiment of hawk-eyed, square-jawed, lank and angry Amazons to spring from ambush upon me when I pay my next visit to the office of this magazine. Wild horses would not drag from me an answer to your questions. The "new woman," Heaven bless her! is as God made her, though perhaps her education has been neglected. Let her rest.

Changing the subject, I find myself in the clutches of another correspondent, this time a lady. She informs me that the "doctrine of amusement" is at present attracting unusual attention, and that it is the great social question of the near future. I know it, madam. Unfortunately I have no practical acquaintance with amusement; for I am kept grinding incessantly in the Philistines' mill. But my friends, who occasionally venture to taste the passing dissipations, tell me that at no period in our history was "the doctrine of amusement," as my correspondent styles it, so warmly discussed as it is now. I observe, too, that the press is devoting endless columns to the subject—a sure indication of public interest. I speak theoretically, of course, when I say that to me wholesome amusement, or as I prefer to call it, recreation, is of the very



essence of healthy social life. We may not all approve of music-hall promenades and entertainments, but it is a poor policy that would rob the world of its fun. "Let the world have their May games," says old Burton, "and whatever sports and recreations please them, provided they be followed with discretion." Followed with discretion—that is the whole point. It is the law of nature to demand change. All work and no play makes Jack an exceedingly stupid boy, and, if care be not taken, is apt

to make him a discontented one as well. Fickleness and flightiness, prurience and morbidness are to be equally condemned. He is a wise man who knows how to unbend properly—shall we say who knows how to play the fool upon occasion? Shakespeare's fools are among the most profound and subtle creations he has left an astonished world; and in putting wit and golden wisdom into their mouths, the master had deeper intents than to provoke a laugh. But he knew (none, perhaps, so well) the wholesome tonic there is in laughter; the bracing and recuperative properties that lie in recreation. So he leads to his ends along the merry paths of enjoyment. Different people will have different ideas of amusement. In Spain they love the bull fight, and applaud vociferously when the unlucky bull-fighter is gored to death or maimed for life. In England we are addicted to the manly sport of the ring. To see one man knock another senseless translates many of us to the seventh heaven of delight. Others prefer horse racing, with its concomitant excitements; and cock-fighting, it is said, is still extensively practised in private. Then there are the play and the music hall to stir our languishing senses. For myself, if I may make a confession, there is nothing cheers and invigorates me like a circus. The clown is always a source of endless fun, and there is ineffable pleasure in watching the performances of well-trained horses. Amusements people must and will have; and

the natural question is: "Why shouldn't they?" I would not do away with seriousness; but if I were able, I would banish sadness, and with it morbidness and prurience and all that supplies the anti-recreation orator with his platitudes. Them's my sentiments. They are neither new nor original; but they are genuine, and my correspondent is welcome to them.

* * *

This is the time when the world, or such part of it as takes an interest in books, realises the extraordinary industry of authors. The stream of literature which flows from the press is a hackneyed phrase, yet it is one that appeals forcibly to some of us. Of yore there were rapid writers. Old stories tell how Livy wrote one hundred and forty-two books, and thought nothing of the achievement; how Aristotle composed four hundred, and smiled as if the feat were nothing; how Cicero would fling off an oration, and Byron a poem, and Scott a romance, as if the thing scarce cost an effort. But to understand what prolificness means, you must come to modern, or, more correctly, to living authors, and of these to such as cater for Christmas needs. The books they produce are seldom literature; but what amazes one is the gift of mere mechanical writing. The writer of Christmas stories is like a machine that is wound up and, barring accidents, goes for a certain number of hours, or days, or weeks, producing certain results as inevitably as a clock ticks or a locomotive runs. The provider of Christmas tales seems to say to himself, or herself, "so many words make a page; so many pages make a book. Go to, let us make one"; and forthwith it is made. The plan is rather hard on readers, but until writing ceases to be mechanical, one does not see how there is to be any change for the better.

* * *

This year's crop of tales differs nothing from the crops of previous years. The same names recur, the same plots are used over again, the same lack of life and character is observable and, finally, the same morals are enforced in the same feeble, tedious old manner. There ought to be a law against enforcing morals in fiction, for many authors come forward who have a moral and nothing else. These certainly ought to be sent to penal servitude for their presumption in wasting

valuable time—not their own time, for that is, seemingly, valueless, but the time of reviewers and readers. Of the countless claimants for public favour, it would be difficult to commend one more than another and avoid the charge of unfairness. The best way, therefore, is to go to the nearest bookseller and select from his stock. Outside of gift books, some noticeable works have appeared during the last month. Among them the "Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier" (Sampson Low and Co.), deserves a high place. It is a record of a noble life spent in the best service of humanity, and gains additional interest from the large number of the poet's letters incorporated in the text. Another biography that will well repay perusal is "John Macgregor (Rob Roy)," by Edwin Hodder (Hodder Brothers). Macgregor was not only a delightful writer but an adventurous traveller, and the tale of his life reads like a romance. In fiction "A Victim of Good Luck," by W. E. Norris (Heinemann), and "The Vagabonds," by Mrs. Woods (Smith, Elder and Co.), are capital stories. Messrs Smith, Elder and Co have issued very attractive editions of the novels and tales of Mrs. Gaskell and the Brontës, which would make delectable presents. It ought to be noted, too, that Messrs. Black's Dryburgh edition of the Waverley Novels is complete. After all, there is no story-teller fit to loose the shoe-latchet of Scott, and there is no handier edition of his works than the Dryburgh.

J. A. S.

DRAMATIC NOTES.

By FITZGERALD ARTHUR.

"THE Derby Winner" at Drury Lane is still running with great strength. The other night, when I visited it once more, the house was more like the first week of the pantomime, in that it was packed from floor to gallery, and that, too, with a highly appreciative and interested audience. This new and original sporting and spectacular drama is from the joint pens of Sir Augustus Harris, Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton, and right well have they done their work. Four acts and thirteen scenes are required to tell the story—one full of human nature, both good and bad. Four sets are worthy of

more than passing notice, *viz.*, Act I.; Brackenhurst Hall; Scene 3 in Act II.; the military ball at York; the closing scene in Act III., Tattersall's; and the final tableau of the drama, which gives us a very faithful representation of the Derby. It is the same old story of a husband and wife being separated through the machinations of a false friend, but this time the story is told naturally and well, and a woman also is brought into the plot. The Earl of Desborough loves his wife, but he also in years gone by had



MR. CHARLES CARTWRIGHT.



MISS LOUISE MOODIE.

a *penchant* for a certain Vivien Darville. She, at the instigation of the false friend, Major Mostyn, turns up under another name—married once more, I suppose—at Brackenhurst Hall, Lord Desborough's Yorkshire seat. Desborough insists on Vivien leaving his house; she is, he says, an insult to his wife. At the same time, Desborough takes a kindly interest in Mary Aylmer, his trainer's daughter. She has been wronged by Major Mostyn. Desborough's letters to Mary and Vivien fall into Mostyn's hands; he manages to manipulate them so that "things are not what they seem." He sows the seeds of discontent in Lady Desborough's mind and then fans the flame of jealousy until Lady Desborough, believing that her husband is carrying on an intrigue with Vivien, leaves his roof, and this under the protection of Major Mostyn. The natural course is followed—solicitors, judges, High Court, etc. Mostyn does his best to break Desborough and nearly succeeds, but he is thwarted by a sporting duchess and an amorous doctor. Desborough and his wife are reconciled over the sick-bed of their only child. Mostyn and Vivien are baulked in their evil designs, and virtue reigns triumphant at last.

The plot is very ingeniously worked out, and the interest is never allowed to flag for one instant, every character introduced being true to nature. For instance, Joe Aylmer, the old trainer, as played by Mr. Lionel Rignold, is a lovable old man: he is true to his employers, and though temptation is put in his way, he knows how to refuse it. His just and righteous indignation with Major Mostyn is very natural. Mrs. John Wood, as the Duchess of Milford—well, she is Mrs. John Wood; and Miss Beatrice Lamb makes a stately and sympathetic Countess of Desborough.

Miss Louise Moodie and Miss Pattie Browne as Mrs. Donelly and Annette Donelly do their duty well and help to fill in the plot with their careful performance.

It is a real pleasure to see a young and handsome and manly hero, and this we have in Mr. Arthur Bouchier. One who plays his part in a genial, unassuming and yet, withal, telling manner; and one, moreover, who looks it. We have had too much of the young old hero in melodrama who has a few set phrases to let off at the gods, and to which those deities respond with huzzas, cat-calls and whistles. Mr. Geo. Giddens, as the amorous and oft-times engaged Dr. Cyprian Streatfield, is responsible, assisted by the Duchess and Annette Donelly, for the comic elements and shades of the drama, and right well does he do his duty. Mr. Harry Eversfield, as Dick Hammond, the jockey, makes the utmost of a small part, and the result is that he wins the sympathies of his audience by his manly representation of the character. Mr. James East, Mr. Chas. D'Alton, Mr. Rudge Harding and Mr. Ernest Lawford, all of the 43rd, render all that is required of them in an adequate manner, and contrive to look very fetching in their uniforms at the military ball in the last



MR. ARTHUR BOURCHIER.

scene of the second act.

To Mr. Charles Cartwright, as Major Mostyn, and Alma Stanley, as Vivien Darville, fall the honours of the play. The plot is written round them, and to them is left the working of it out. I have so often written in more than one place about these two, that I need only now remark they act with the usual forcible and telling vigour one is wont to associate with their names. The "Derby Winner" is an interesting play, and is still going strong, though it will have to make way very shortly for Sir Augustus Harris's

sixteenth grand Christmas pantomime—"Dick Whittington."

Sir Augustus has contributed in no small measure to the success of the British



MR. LIONEL RIGNOLD.



MISS WINIFRED EMERY.

stage. He has been indefatigable in unearthing new talent all over the globe, and insatiable in his desire to place new plays and operas before his patrons. He has established a reputation for always being absolutely reliable and thorough in all he does, and now one feels confident that whatever Sir Augustus turns his hand to is sure to be, at least, an artistic success. Not only will Drury Lane be ever associated with his name; he has also revived the glories of Covent Garden, and has given us there the finest of operas, Italian,

German and English, and also promenade concerts, and a series of fancy dress balls.

* * *

Mr. Comyns Carr has inaugurated his season at the Comedy Theatre by the production of Mr. Sydney Grundy's original comedy, "The New Woman." That the comedy is an artistic and financial success is proved by the crowded houses that nightly fill the pretty little theatre in Panton Street. In spite of this, and though the piece fairly bristles with brilliant dialogue, and the play is most carefully and artistically acted, yet I must admit to a feeling of disappointment in it. the "new woman" is, at the best, a disreputable creature, and it may be that Mr. Grundy is anxious to bring her into yet further contempt by pouring ridicule on her head. The "new woman" wants not only equality with that effete and played-out creature, man, but she also wants to show her supreme contempt for him by completely "bossing" him. It is meet and right that what man does woman should be permitted to do. So if he, in his innate wickedness, goes to dinners or other meetings and comes home somewhat elated, or otherwise upset by the oppressive heat of the room, she is at once at liberty to go on a fair "Jamboree." If Mr. Grundy can succeed in showing us all what an idiotic production of the latter end of the nineteenth century this creature, the "new woman," is, he will not have written his comedy in vain. Actually at that home for such people, the Pioneer Club, the members were debating, only the other day, as to whether the "new woman" was not carrying things too far, and bringing herself and her cause into contempt with man. One strong-minded Amazon boldly stated that we poor wretches (men) deserved all we got, and a lot more to boot.

Mr. Comyns Carr, as usual, has succeeded in gathering together a most excellent cast. Miss Winifred Emery, as heretofore, is his leading lady, and a more gentle and charming one it would be hard to find. The part of Margery Armstrong is not worthy of Miss Emery's abilities. Of the other ladies of the cast, Miss Rose Leclerq and Miss Gertrude Warden are the most prominent. Miss Rose Leclerq is, as she ever is, excellent as Lady Wargrave, and Miss Gertrude Warden, as Victoria Vivash, makes an idiotic part at least interesting. Mr. Cyril Maude has a

part in which he fairly revels, and, as Colonel Cazenove, gives us another of his delightful character sketches. Mr. Fred Terry is absolutely wasted as Gerald Cazenove, yet he loyally works, and manages to make even Gerald Cazenove a more or less interesting person. Yet, as I remarked before, the piquancy of the lines and the admirable and uniformly good acting cause "The New Woman" to attract and fill the house. This being so, it is out of my province to say anything more.

Mr. H. Tripp Edgar has been giving us "A Trip to China Town," at Toole's Theatre, while genial J. L. T. is away delighting his many provincial friends. If one will take it as it comes, and not look seriously on "A Trip to China Town," you can get a lot of amusement out of it. Act I. is decidedly good, and has been most cleverly stage-managed; but after this, the piece falls away, and one is brought face to face with variety show—some good, some bad and some indifferent. I am not going to attempt to analyse the play or musical comedy, or to describe the plot; I will content myself by saying a few—a very few words about the artists. The bright and particular



MISS GERTRUDE WARDEN.

star is supposed to be Mr. R. G. Knowles, that truly humorous and eccentric comedian from Yankeeland. Mr. Knowles on the Variety stage for a quarter of an hour turn is excruciatingly funny, but after three hours right off the reel, I must admit he begins to pall. A lot of his humour is so subtle, it requires meditation and reflection, and you feel annoyed when you are pondering and thinking out one of his flashes of Yankee wit, that he should break in upon your reverie with another charge of similar jocosity. Miss Edith Bruce makes a very fine widow, and Miss Georgie Wright a very pretty and pert maid. Mr. H. De Lange, as Ben Gay, a wealthy old bachelor, gives us a delightful piece of genuine comedy. Mr. De Lange is an artist to his finger-tips, and whatsoever he doeth he doeth well. Mr. Edgar Stevens, a young actor and vocalist who is rapidly coming to the front, is Rashleigh, old Ben Gay's nephew. He has no part to speak of, though it is one of the principal ones in the piece, but yet he makes a great deal of it. His song, which he works on in the first act, is charmingly rendered, and receives the encore it deserves. The undoubted success of the piece is the clever, very clever, performance of Miss May Edouin. Her Willie Grow, simply



MR. CYRIL MAUDE.

bubbles over with fun and hilarity. Truly here is a case of heredity. One recognises the charming and clever mother and the equally artistic father, in Miss Edouin. I fancy I can safely prophesy that Miss May Edouin has a great future before her.

* * *

"His Excellency," Mr. Gilbert and Osmond Carr's new piece, has been successfully produced at the Lyric. "Little Christopher Columbus" has migrated to Terry's and once more taken a new lease of life, Miss Addie Conyers being the new Christopher, Miss Florence St. John having gone to "Mirette" at the Savoy. "The Fatal Card" approaches its one-hundredth night and still goes as strong as ever. "The Foundling" and "Truthful James" have both run their course, while "Charley's Aunt" and "The New Boy" still continue to play to full houses.

* *

In America, Miss Olga Nethersole has—in spite of many difficulties—been scoring heavily, her "Transgressor" and "Camille" being received with rapturous marks of approval. Mr. Frank Worthing, who has accompanied Miss Nethersole, has also come in for his meed of praise for his able and highly artistic performances.

It is rather late in the day to talk about rowing, but two gentlemen, both connected with the world of drama, have lately accomplished a feat which is worthy of record. The distance from Oxford to Mortlake is one hundred miles, and the shortest time in which this has been covered by three men in a boat is twenty-four hours. Messrs. Brinkworth and Barnes, however, set themselves the task of going one better, and in an inrigged, double-sculling pleasure skiff, built by Abnet and Son, of Hampton Court, they sculled from Oxford to Barnes Railway Bridge, a distance of one hundred and one miles one furlong three chains, in twenty-two hours thirty-five minutes, out of which time they lost two hours in clearing the different locks.

I shall not be surprised to hear that some one beats this next season.

* *

I can recommend to my lady readers a pretty little song that has come under my notice since last month. It is entitled, "Love's Day," and is published by Weekes and Co., of Hanover Street, Regent Street; the words, by Mr. Carr Vernon, are set to a very tuneful melody by S. H. E. Jackson, a name not altogether unknown in the musical world.



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❖ Puzzledom ❖

162. A Transposition. Y O E A D M R D R

An animal much used by man, it is very docile, and in some parts of the world indispensable.

163. Enigma.

I am long, I'm short, I'm crooked, I'm straight,
Sometimes I'm fast and sometimes slow,
I'm strong, I'm weak, I'm small, I'm great,
I'm sometimes high and sometimes low.

Though I've no brains—'tis no disgrace,
I can reflect; I have a head,
Though beneficial in my place,
I'm dangerous when I leave my bed.

To commerce I lend willing aid,
Although with merchants do not rank,
Nor even do engage in trade,
You are sure to find me at the bank.

164. A Word Square.

1. A poet. 2. A lady's name. 3. Ancient. 4. Rows. 5. A herb.

Conundrums.

165. What is that which goes from London to Brighton, yet never moves?

166. When you put on your slipper why do you always make a mistake?

167. Why are the blind the most compassionate of people?

168. What herb is most injurious to a lady's beauty?

◆

Five Prizes of Three-Volume Novels, cloth bound, will be awarded to the First Five Competitors sending in correct or most correct answers by 20th December. Competitions should be addressed "December Puzzles," THE LUDGATE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE, Temple House, Temple Avenue, London, E.C. Post cards only, please.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER PUZZLES.

155. *Persevere ye perfect men,
Ever keep these precepts ten.*

156. *A hiss.*

157. *Plea, Leap, Ease, Apes.*

158. *A looking-glass.*

159. *Because they have studded the heavens
ever since the creation.*

160. *Because it would be making game of
him.*

161. *Heat, because you can catch cold.*

The following are the names and addresses of the five winners in Puzzledom in our October Number, to whom the Three-Volume Novels have been sent:—
R. S. Thomas, Lucknow Lodge, Uxbridge Road, Hanwell, London, W.; J. E. Pegram, Bank House, Dunmow, Essex; J. L. Johns, 20, Stoke Terrace, Stoke, Devonport; Miss H. Hedger, Coulsdon, The Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey; F. J. Iles, The Lawn, Cotham Park, Bristol.

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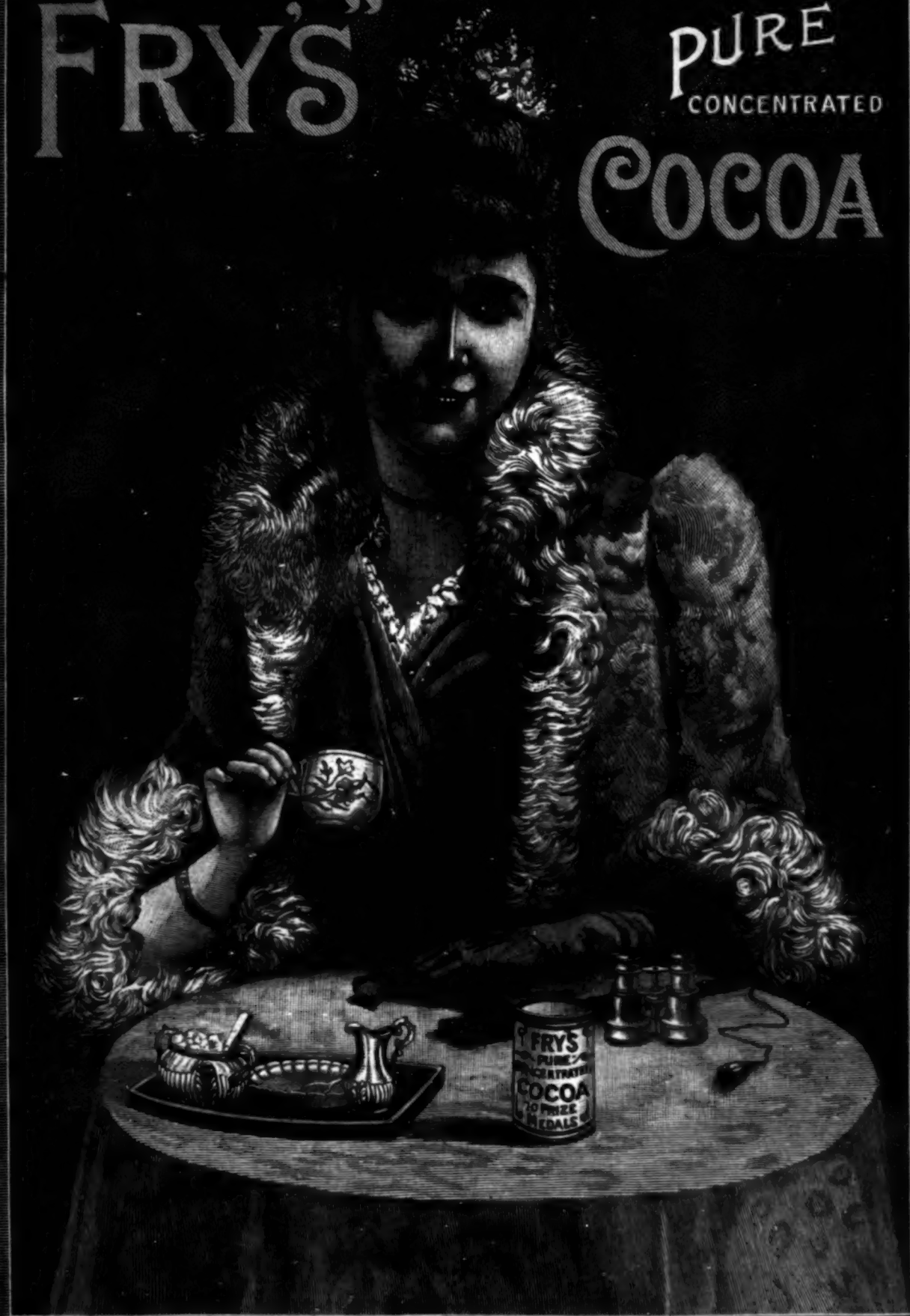
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